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ACROSS BORDERS: QUESTIONS, PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCES

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ACROSS BORDERS: QUESTIONS, PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCES

Luis Hernan, Iulia Statica and Emma Cheatle

Sometimes doing something poetic can become political and sometimes doing something political can become poetic

Francis Alÿs[1]

The relationship between architecture and border studies is, rightly, at the forefront of many architectural scholars' minds, and has seen the inception of other publications, most notably Angeliki Sioli, Nishat Awan and Kristopher Palagi's edited collection *Architecture of Resistance: Negotiating Borders through Spatial Practices* (KU Leuven, forthcoming) and a special issue of Architecture and Culture, 'Border Fictions' edited by Mohamad Hafeda, Samuel Vardy and Paula McCloskey (again forthcoming). We started putting together this issue of *field*, 'Across Borders: Questions, Practices and Performances' — the first full collection on architecture and borders to be published — by defining what we specifically meant by the notion of border. The conventional meaning, as the delineation of territory, has shaped our individual lives: the three of us have moved across borders, territories, communities and languages several times; we have crisscrossed our identities from the colonised Global South, the so-called commonwealth colonised antipodes, the settler colonial North America, the (post)

communist East of Europe. We have experienced borders not as neutral separation lines, as Prem Kumar Rajaram and Carl Grundy-Warr suggest, but as the creation of distinction between centre and periphery, normal and exceptional, belonging and not belonging.[2] Borders enact biopolitics: demarcating (and othering) identity, creating zones of exception, and marking jurisdictions in which bodies (racialised, gendered) can be disciplined and made to conform or cohere. We realised, as we continued our attempt to define, that any understanding of the border is always entangled with other political concepts. The border is the logical consequence of the notion of the utopia that underlies the nation state. An ideal place can only be created if it is set against the other, or its dystopia; the creation of boundaries, physical or artificial, makes sure that the conditions for the ideal place are maintained.[3] Borders, whether material or metaphorical, are always at once utopian, colonial, patriarchal, capitalist and hegemonic.

As we take stock of the timeline leading to the publication of this special issue we realise that the idea of borders was already particularly charged with meaning in the summer of 2022 when we had our first conversations that would lead to our call for papers. Borders have been a recurrent topic, especially in right-wing discourses which insist it is impossible to have nations without enacting territorial demarcations. In recent years, understandings of borders have become ever more specific and material, political and laden with distress. Alongside the crude traditional strategies which, at best, control, and at worst, maim bodies, new technologies have been developed which are meant to make borders (ironically) more human. The so-called 'humanisation' of the border comes hand in hand with a dispersal of bordering principles and the framing of demarcation lines as design challenges to create more secure environments. It also comes with a more pervasive understanding of borders, articulated by new technologies tracking our everyday life, to continuously create and reinforce categories of belonging and exclusion.[4] If anything, the notion of borders, as both natural and necessary, has become ever more present and pernicious — it has again been placed at the centre of the debate in elections across the world, with right-wing politics intensifying focus on national boundaries, otherness, and who can be tougher on immigration with the closure or reinforcement of borders. Borders continue to define the occupation and war in Palestine, the contested sovereignties in Eastern Europe, the (off)shore of Australia and more generally, the refugee crises across the globe.

When we launched the call, we proposed 'Across Borders: Questions, Practices and Performances' partly as metaphor and partly as method: in order to ask critical questions we wanted to suggest borders can be crossed in the mind, or thought of as porous (as Haraway would have it). Porous borders are modes of thinking (practicing and performing). We ask then: how are borders not static, how can they be challenged, how do 'poetic/politic' performances draw attention to and dismantle their hegemonies?[5] Our work as editors is influenced by practices of translation (from one language to another, from practice to writing, from place to place) which here we interpret as a practice of talking across disciplines, transcending, threading and embedding specificities.

1 Text to Francis Alÿs, *The Green Line*, 2004. Jerusalem, Israel. Film 17:41 min. In collaboration with Philippe Bellaiche, Rachel Leah Jones, and Julien Devaux. At https://francisalys.com/the-green-line/ (accessed 15 May 2024).

2 Prem Kumar Rajaram and Carl Grundy-Warr (eds.), *Borderscapes: Hidden Geographies and Politics at Territory's Edge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

3 Here we are thinking of the work of Elisabeth Grosz in defining utopia and her genealogy of the term connecting contemporary notions to the original formulation in Thomas Moore's novel imagining an island whose geographical features enable an insulated, self-contained community. See Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001).

4 Chiara Brambilla, 'Exploring the Critical Potential of the Borderscapes Concept', *Geopolitics* 20, no. 1 (2 January 2015): pp. 14–34, https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2014.884561.

5 Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century' [1985], in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, edited by Linda J. Nicholson (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 190–233 (p. 198).

Gloria Anzaldúa's semi-autobiographical 1987 book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* speaks of the importance of translation as a form of practice that embraces the multiplicities and contradictions of borders.[6] Writing prose and poetry in both Spanish and English, Anzaldúa untangles the spaces of internalised sexual and gendered identities, and questions the misogyny, homophobia and racism created by her Chicano community and its Mexican roots. She examines the geo-material spaces of Aztlán, now southern Texas, where she grew up. Now fixed and scarred by settler colonialism, she unpicks their histories as shifting indigenous spaces. Anzaldúa's prose is as much a methodology as an acknowledgement of the impossibility to explain boundaries, to describe Aztlán, a land that is as much a mystical as it is a historically contested territory. Her writing is not only a challenge to the physical border that divides communities, but a conceptual exploration of borders that categorise and create normative sexualities.

The work of Anzaldúa also suggests the importance of the personal in accounting for the affectivity of borders, inviting us to look outside the traditional methodologies of spatial enquiry to find narratives of borders in literature, film and oral histories. In her video essay 'Performing the Border', Ursula Biemann explores the Mexican/US border town of Ciudad Juárez as the site of the *maquiladoras*, subcontracted factories for major US digital and electronic assembly lines.[7] Beimann follows the lives of young, adolescent, even, Mexican women working in the companies. The border town here suggests a series of complex and ambiguous spaces: the geopolitical space between the harshness of the northern Mexican desert and the fixity of the border wall itself, with the unattainable Texan town of El Paso visible to the north in the US; the socio-political space mapped by the extremes of a better material life falsely promised by both the labour in and the products of the high tech companies the women work in; and the physical slum space they inhabit where inequities abound and the realities and dangers of prostitution and rape are rife. Although Beimann's border is undeniably pictured as spatially divisive and exploitative, materially and metaphorically controlled and dangerous, it also has moments of joy and resistance.

This issue of *field* aims to bridge different definitions, constructions and expressions of the border as a space between cultures and of cross-cultures, haunted by ideologies and their afterlives; as a skin or membrane, a ground, a construction, a line, a place, an accident, an embodiment, an encounter, a metaphor, a brutal reality and an atmosphere. It asks how the border might be crossed, dissolved, or contested, or how its existence is simply negotiated or experienced. It seeks to evaluate the transnational, the geopolitical, the biopolitical, and the social as well as the poetic and conceptual. To speak of the questions, practices and performances of borders is an invitation to delineate the continuities between historical and contemporary forms of colonialism; to observe the dangers of the conceptual tools that enable us to classify, claim and colonise, as well as the ambiguity and nuance they engender.

6 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: the New Mestiza* [1987] (San Francisco: Lute Books, 1999).

7 Ursula Biemann, *Performing the Border*, 1999. Film 43 minutes. At https://vimeo.com/74185298 (accessed 7 May 2024).

The borderlands have been traditionally spaces of contestation, places at the margins where radical imagination is possible. This number of *field* is published in wider dialogue with research on border studies, architecture and other design and artistic disciplines.[8] The articles published here illuminate and problematise the continuities and problematic histories of borders while suggesting ways to imagine them in a radically different way, or even a world beyond and without border practices. We draw inspiration from Sam Durant's 2015 etching *Proposal for a Map of the World* — referencing the 1955 Asian-African Conference of Bandung, Indonesia that aspired towards a collective imagining of a postcolonial future — proposing an alternate geography that opens up new perspectives to reassess historical hierarchies and geopolitics.[9] These fragmented, yet relational new geographies that the artist reimagines can be seen as a way of articulating another moment, one of rupture, after Bandung, in which the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the end of the Cold War have generated new geographical and epistemological alignments and misalignments. An inquiry into the legacies of the latter, as Durant's work provokes, is ever more relevant in the present time in which imaginings of borders still speak to contested sovereignties and irredentisms, and reanimate ghosts of ideologies in the very territories that dissolved them.

The articles featured in this issue approach the concept and practice of borders from a rich and diverse array of interdisciplinary perspectives. By embracing speculation and experimentation, these pieces create a fertile ground for exploring the possibilities and challenges inherent in border issues. Spanning various time periods and geographic contexts, the entries use a wide range of scales, methods, bodies and concepts to probe the evolving significance and experience of borders. One key theme unites all the contributions: the concrete embeddedness, the architectures, of these practices. From North to South and further to the East, borders and knowledges deeply rooted in specific locations, policies and histories, are addressed and reevaluated. The concept of the border intrinsically involves the human body, which constantly engages in contesting, transgressing, or complying with these dividing lines. This issue brings to light how borders shape and are shaped by the lived experiences of people within these geographically, historically and politically charged spaces.

The issue explores these themes through two types of contributions: one set invites engagement with the concept of borders with seven creative essays, while the other presents six scholarly peer reviewed papers that delve into extended narratives.

creative essays

Adrian Câtu's documentary photo essay, which extends from the cover image, explores the pressing border struggles of our time, illustrating the direct impact of the war in Ukraine and its profound repercussions on the daily lives of ordinary people. With detailed, rich documentary photographs of unfamiliar

8 For example, Nishat Awan, *Diasporic Agencies: Mapping the City Otherwise* (Ashgate, 2016); Cordelia E. Barrera, 'Utopic Dreaming on the Borderlands: An Anzaldúan Reading of Yuri Herrera's Signs Preceding the End of the World', *Utopian Studies*, 31.3 (2020), pp. 475–93 <https://doi.org/10.5325/utopianstudies.31.3.0475>; Iain Biggs, *Between Carterhaugh and Tamsheil Rig: A Borderline Episode* (Bristol: Wild Conversation Press, 2004); Border Environments, Goldsmiths University (CRA Press 2023) https://research-architecture.org/Border-Environments-1 (Accessed 7 May 2024); Felipe Hernández, Mark Millington, and Iain Borden, *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America* (Rodopi, 2005); Henk van Houtum and Mark Eker, 'Redesigning Borderlands. Using the Janus Face of Borders as a Resource', in *Borderscaping: Imaginations and Practices of Border Making*, (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 41–52; Norma Iglesias-Prieto, 'Nuevos Agentes Sociales, Nuevos Espacios Urbanos y Las Posibilidades De Cambio. Las Artes Visuales En Tijuana', *Berkeley Planning Journal*, 21.1 (2008) <https://doi.org/10.5070/BP321112728>; Wendy Pullan and Britt Baillie (eds.), *Locating Urban Conflicts: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Everyday* (Berlin: Springer, 2013); Ronald Rael, *Borderwall as Architecture: A Manifesto for the U.S.-Mexico Boundary* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017); Pepe Rojo and others, *Amor Forense: Birds in Shorts City.: Anthology of Bodies Writing in San Diego* (San Diego, CA: Observatorio Editorial Tijuana, 2015); Tamara Vukov and Mimi Sheller, 'Border Work: Surveillant Assemblages, Virtual Fences, and Tactical Counter-Media', *Social Semiotics*, 23.2 (2013), pp. 225–41 <https://doi.org/10.1080/10350330.2013.777592>; Thomas M Wilson, Hastings Donnan, 'Borders and border studies', in *A Companion to Border Studies*, edited by Thomas M Wilson, Hastings Donnan (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), pp. 1–25.

9 See image at MoMA, https://www.moma.org/collection/works/222355 (accessed 7 May 2024).

and familiar landscapes and interiors, the essay testifies to the ongoing geopolitical shifts and the lasting echoes of Cold War legacies in this postsocialist region. It simultaneously directly speaks to the human scale through the everyday objects displaced along with their owners from their original contexts, bringing focus to the personal and emotional experiences of those displaced by the conflict. Cith Skelcher's examination of borders within an insular, postcolonial context draws from the teachings of an MArch design studio 'Invisible Cities' taught at the Sheffield school of Architecture . It explores pedagogical strategies for deconstructing established boundaries and seeks innovative modes of intervention. With Cyprus serving as a central case study, Skelcher investigates architecture's role in contentious spaces, confronting the geopolitical tensions and legacies of colonialism that continue to shape the political landscape. Hanna Baumann engages in a conversation with Palestinian artist Khaled Jarrar to explore the impact of borders on individuals' lives, focussing on Jarrer's artistic practice in relation to occupied Palestine. Written before the most recent, terrible (and as we write, ongoing) atrocities in Gaza, Jarrar's work is a blend of symbolic resistance and active engagement with the realities of occupation, showing how art can challenge oppressive systems and inspire a sense of future possibility.

Shifting regions, but similarly engaging with creative practices, Tom Keeley explores the concept of boundaries through his unique artistic 'topographic-practice', situated on the island of Eire. Keeley's work blurs the lines between interior and territory, using on-site installations to examine the political implications of boundary-making. These installations serve as allegories, offering new ways to understand and question the construction of borders. By challenging conventional narratives, Keeley's practice suggests alternative perspectives on how boundaries are created and experienced, encouraging deeper reflection on their impact in a broader socio-political context. Using poetry, Eloise Maltby Maland offers a compelling critique of the UK's border policies. She focuses on Lunar House, the Home Office Visa and Immigration hub in South London, where the realities of border control manifest as everyday life. By incorporating key concepts from various authors, Maland brings to light the tangible reality of Lunar House, where abstract notions of borders and exclusion take on a stark, physical form. Her poetic exploration prompts readers to consider the human impact of border policies and the spaces where these effects are most acutely felt. Paula McCloskey and Sam Vardy, who constitute the art/architecture practice, A Place of Their Own, make an analysis of 'Eile {Border Fictioning}' exhibited at Bloc Projects in Sheffield, UK in 2022. They reflect on emergent ideas of how their historical, experiential and speculative work uses multiple fiction ecologies as an anti-colonial practice. Liam Healy presents a photo essay displaying a series of photographs of the Jungle camp, Calais' largest improvised refugee camp, taken in 2019, three years

after it had been cleared and re-landscaped into an eco-park. The article makes a critique of this as a 'new topographic' to radicalise the neutralised view offered of Calais as the UK border in France and critique the romanticised origins of landscape photography.

academic papers

The research articles in this issue share commonalities in their approaches, revealing the border as a multifaceted concept — at times spatialised, at times symbolic — consistently situated and enmeshed in the geopolitics of contested sovereignties. Whether explored through literary analysis or ethnographic inquiry, borders emerge as mechanisms of subordination, with echoes of (post)colonial legacies. Implicit within all contributions is the theme of 'home', highlighting the ongoing negotiation of border transgressions and the inherent sense of unsettlement and violence. Marwa Al Khalidi and Gunnar Sandin explore the contrasting geographies of categories such as Global North and Global South through a comparative analysis of bordering practices in the cities of Lund in Sweden and Irbid in North Jordan. Their study, which focuses on the treatment of newcomers, especially refugees from the Syrian conflict, adopts a 'parallel walking' methodology to highlight differences in how these cities integrate new populations. This dialogical approach sheds light on how governmental policies position newcomers within the context of each city's unique history and heritage, offering insights into the broader dynamics of migration and integration. Working with Nishat Awan's concept of 'border topologies' — highlighting the ambiguous nature of modern borders — simultaneously open and closed, structured by an array of geopolitical, social, and environmental factors — Stefano Mastromarino and Camillo Boano bring to sight the territories of transit within Europe discussing the French-Italian border. The question of environment, with its peculiar rural nature — encompassing an alpine topography that intensifies the violent nature of trespassing — is explored against the fluidity of the border itself, reflecting broader European dynamics, as the border remains subject to political redefinition and enforcement, illustrating the complex and evolving nature of modern European borders.

Taking as a starting point three Science Fiction (SF) novels, Amy Brookes speculates on the notion of border through the lens of literature, architecture and art. Her article explores the boundary as a fertile space of transformation, both physically and metaphorically, while pregnancy — as a visceral act — is likened to an intimate dissolution of individuality. For Brookes, SF explores borderlands as transformative, suggesting that crossing them requires embracing hybridity and letting go of former selves. The paper reflects on how reading SF can be a transformative act, fostering critical thinking about real-world borders, exclusion, and the possibility of creating more inclusive, empathetic spaces. The literary enquiry extends also with Angela Kyriacou Petrou's examination of the notion of borders within the domestic sphere in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. By focusing on spatiality within the domestic novel, the paper uncovers subtle mechanisms of erasure that normalise specific practices of domesticity and underpin colonial power. Approaching a gendered lens, the female body is questioned in relation to such narratives, with women acting as public bodies and landscapes transformed into idealised backdrops. Luis Hernan's article problematises our understanding of the border through an exploration of the 'tech bros' who shape both the narratives of Silicon Valley and influence new 'invisible' technologies of bordering. Through a 'transmigration of stories', inspired by Magical Realism, Hernan unearths Western and Native understandings of the land to co-exist to make visible the project of colonisation and violence. Reminding us that borders are also enacted on bodies, Joshua McVeigh and Anastasia Karandinou write about the queer spaces of Soho in London. Reflecting on their own positionality, McVeigh and Karandinou engage in close dialogue with Peter Ackroyd's 'Queer City'

to explore the historical spaces of experimentation in Soho and what they tell us of queerness as a form of crossing and blurring of borders in urban spaces.

In all, this rich array understands and politicises both the strategies and lived experiences of the border through porous interdisciplinary thinking that draws from literature, creative practice, argument, history. It captures the border's affective dimensions, how it is lived, yet also questions its pasts and futures. As Nerea Calvillo suggests in Aeropolis, the air that we breathe is borderless, multiple and layered yet still socially bound.[10] Timothy Choy states: 'Air disrespects borders, yet at the same is constituted through difference. Neighbourhoods have different atmospheres; nations generate and apply different pollution standards [...] Gradients, whose foundations are the contact and bleeding of difference, move air through the spaces we live and through our bodies.'[11] Through the concept of airscape, we might return to Sam Durant's reimagining of a postcolonial world and national borders. And once we accept the ambiguity of the airscape, the border becomes a futile material construction, instead potentially speculative, open, performed and located, crossed, translated and disrespected.

Luis Hernan, Iulia Statica and Emma Cheatle, May 2024

10 Nerea Calvillo, *Aeropolis, Queering Air in Toxicpolluted Worlds* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2023).

11 Timothy K. Choy, *Ecologies of Comparison: An Ethnography of Endangerment in Hong Kong* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 165.

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A DOG, A CAT, A GUINUEA PIG. AND A WAR

Adrian Câtu

It was February 26, 2022 and I was on a ferry crossing the Danube from Orlivka to Isaccea, Romania. I had spent just a couple of hours on the Ukrainian side of the border. People and cars lined up for miles, waiting as much as twenty hours to board the ferry towards the safety of the Romanian territory. The border police kindly asked me to avoid taking pictures because they feared an aerial attack on the border post. So I just watched the flow of refugees before boarding the ferry back to Isaccea.

The ferry was packed. Women and children. Improvised bags. Pets. Sadness, shock and worry on their faces. I was walking among them wondering how I could even ask them to talk with me and painfully recall the trauma they had just experienced.

Then a man approached me. 'Are you a journalist?' he asked. 'If you want, I can talk. I want to tell you everything.' This is how I met Andreyi.

'This is our second time,' he told me, his blue eyes looking towards the shiny Romanian shore of the Danube. 'We used to live in Donbas. But in 2013 when the conflict started, we relocated to Odessa.'

'We', I would find out, meant Andreyi, his wife Tatyiana and their three children. The youngest one is five years old. They only have some backpacks with their clothes. But they could not leave behind their pets: a dog, a cat and a guinea pig.

'I used to work as a corporate lawyer,' Andreyi told me. 'I don't see how I could practise law in another country. But I don't mind, I would accept any kind of work. We will not return to Ukraine. As long as Russia is our neighbour, it will never be safe for us [Ukraine].'

His wife looks absent, alone with her thoughts, while the elder children stay close to her. I take a few pictures then we exchange contact details. The ferry docks and the crowd of people starts flowing towards the border control. Volunteers offer hot tea, water and food. They are not very well organised but there are so many and everyone wants to help. Food and basic commodities, formula, cosmetics offered for free. Accommodation. Transportation. Translators. Andreyi is asking for accommodation. I see him and his family boarding a car. He waves me goodbye.

One month later, I received a phone call from him. 'Could you help? My wife… she is not good. She has PTSD attacks. Her parents are in the sieged Mariupol and she lost contact with them five days ago. She needs help but I don't know what to do.' I suggested that he call the emergency services. He messaged me later saying she was better after a doctor helped her.

A few days later I am again at the border and I message him, hoping to pay a visit. He shows me the location of a boarding house in the Danube Delta. I drive there and find the whole house full with Ukrainians. The owner offered them accommodation and food for free. They have been living there for one month already. Children are playing. His youngest daughter is playing with her father, her happy face contrasting with his worried one. He is evaluating options: leave to Canada, or leave to another European country. But the whole process is cumbersome and unfamiliar to him.

Last time we spoke, he called me. 'Hey', he said. 'We were lucky. An NGO helped us and we moved to Denmark. They helped with papers and relocation. It's good here so far. And as I told you, we will not return to Ukraine. We won't risk being refugees for a third time.'


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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Adrian Catû

Adrian Catû's transition from the IT industry to the realms of anthropology and photography in 2014 marked the beginning of a remarkable journey. Having graduated a master's degree in anthropology, he embarked on a career as a commercial and documentary photographer, with his work gracing the pages of prestigious publications such as National Geographic, The New York Times, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, The Guardian. Adrian has been a compelling and committed storyteller, his long term projects covering coal mining, floods, human trafficking or refugees. His 2020 portrait of a child who survived heart surgery earned him an Award of Excellence at Picture of the Year Intl. Beyond photography, he delved into filmmaking, with his debut documentary, 'My Socialist Home', premiering in London in 2021. In tandem with his artistic endeavours, Adrian completed a Ph.D. in cultural anthropology in 2021, exploring human-animal relationships in Burkina Faso. His personal projects have been exhibited in art galleries and acquired by private collectors, showcasing his ability to capture the intricate facets of the human experience in a powerful and intimate visual language.

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MORPHING FORMS, UNDERMINING BORDER REGIMES

Hanna Baumann and
Khaled Jarrar

ABSTRACT

This short piece - written in exchange with Palestinian artist Khaled Jarrar - charts his work over the past decade as it deals with borders. In particular, it focuses on a set of linked projects in which the material from the Israeli 'Separation Wall' in the West Bank were transformed into art objects, which then served as the basis for purchasing agricultural land in Palestine. In a new phase for the project, the outputs harvested the land now morph again in order to infiltrate international boundaries under 'false pretences'. It is argued that Jarrar's work uses the specificities of the art market as well as material-bureaucratic conditions of national boundaries to draw attention to and undermine unjust borders.

MORPHING FORMS, UNDERMINING BORDER REGIMES: IN CONVERSATION WITH KHALED JARRAR

I first encountered Khaled Jarrar in 2011, at Checkpoint Charlie, the legendary Cold War crossing point between East and West Berlin. Jarrar, a tall man who once served in Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's personal guard, stood at the site of the checkpoint where East German border guards once inspected papers, now bustling with tourists, and offered to stamp people's passports. For his project, *Live and work in Palestine* (2011-14), he designed an official-looking passport stamp, featuring a circular image of an indigenous bird, the Palestine Sunbird, surrounded by the words 'State of Palestine' in English and Arabic (fig 1).

Figure 1 Khaled Jarrar, *State of Palestine*, stamp (2011).

Jarrar, born in the West Bank city of Jenin in 1976, says of the project: 'I sought to find an adequate art practice that dismantles the absence of the Palestinian State.'[1] More than a year before the UN granted Palestine non-member observer status, the phrase 'State of Palestine' was still rarely invoked. Today, it is emblazoned on all Palestinian Authority inscriptions, from letterheads to local municipal authority offices to diplomatic missions abroad. However, in light of ongoing Israeli occupation and lack of self-determination for the Palestinian people, it remains a symbolic attempt to call a new reality into being, a way of 'manifesting' a future vision – much like Jarrar's stamp at the time.

Audience members at Checkpoint Charlie became implicated in the artwork when they handed over their papers, some knowing they would face additional interrogation for this stamp when attempting to enter Palestine via its Israeli-controlled borders in the future. Jarrar was aware of this saying: 'They agreed to take a risk by putting the stamp of the "State of Palestine" in their passport.' What was important to him was to not only involve the audience in a participatory experience as 'passports [were] sealed with the stamp of the extraordinary state' but to 'use art in an open confrontation with reality.'

Over the past decade, Jarrar's practice has been marked by an ongoing engagement with borders. In this confrontational manner, he reveals tensions between their materiality, symbolism and performance, their embodied and their psychological effects on people. In doing so, Jarrar uses the spaces for manoeuvre the art world provides to expose the weaknesses of national border regimes and to actively undermine national boundaries, sometimes by deploying their own tools against them.

1 All quotes taken from the author's conversations with Jarrar, held between December 2022 and February 2023.)

Jarrar became widely known as an artist working on borders for his film, Infiltrators (2012, 70 mins), about Palestinians who navigate and subvert Israel's bewildering matrix of control as they attempt to enter Israel and East Jerusalem without a permit from the Israeli military regime. The film shows unravelling adventures of various individuals' and groups' attempts during their search for gaps in the wall, which separates the West Bank from Israel but also cuts many Palestinians off from their own lands, in order to sneak past it. The film won accolades at a number of international film festivals and established a name for Jarrar on the international art scene.

The same year he released *Infiltrators*, Jarrar started the project *Whole in the Wall* (2012-13). As documented in the short film *Concrete* (2012, 2 mins), he manually hacked away at the Israeli Separation Wall in a laborious process – one that surprisingly was not discovered by the Israeli border police (see fig 2). Jarrar has an uncle who was involved in constructing the wall, and describes this problematic positionality as follows: 'My uncle lives in a small village near the Green Line. The main livelihood used to be agriculture, but that is no longer possible. So he has worked as a professional construction worker in Israel. Then he worked on building the Wall for several years.' Jarrar speaks about the shame such work brings, but also shows understanding for the way Palestinians are implicated, more or less directly, in Israel's settler colonial enterprise. Jarrar's uncle still holds on to his mother's Ottoman deed proving ownership of land inside the Green Line, in the fertile Marj Ibn Amir (renamed the Jezreel Valley by Israel). He hides the title deed not because he has hopes of ever getting the land back but because there are periodic rumours that, in the frame of a final peace agreement, UNRWA may compensate Palestinians for land of which they were dispossessed in 1948. In the meantime, in lieu of land or compensation, the only way to make a living is to seek employment within Israel's settler

Figure 2 Khaled Jarrar, Film still from *Concrete* (2012, 2 mins)

colonial project, and actively contribute to the physical infrastructures that imprison Palestinians. Jarrar views this implication as being drawn into a cyclical process driven by settler-colonialism: 'First they take our land, then they make us work for them like slaves, and in the end, they sell the products we made, with our own labour and on our own land, back to us.'

In contrast to this complex and messy reality, Jarrar's symbolic act of dismantling of the wall might, at first glance, be read as a clear and straightforward gesture of refusal and resistance. Jarrar used the concrete chiselled from the barrier to reconstitute everyday objects of leisure, including a ping-pong set; football boots; a set of juggling pins; a traditional ring-shaped Jerusalem bread called *ka'ek*; a football; a basketball; and a volleyball (fig 3). Quotidian and personal objects usually marked by their light, even playful nature, become heavy and violent. As the viewer

imagines attempting to handle a ball, juggle with the concrete pins, or bite into the fluffy bread, a visceral response is elicited – objects that are known as tools or means of enjoyment become obstacles, potential sources of (unexpected) pain. Through mutating the constituent material of the wall into objects of everyday life, Jarrar's work suggests that the power of the border lies not only in its form as a physical obstacle, but in the way it seeps into and reshapes people's lives. It permeates the everyday, infiltrates the most intimate realms of personal experience, affecting social ties and morphing emotive landscapes.[2] At the same time, however, Jarrar's attack on the wall shows that despite its 'concreteness', it is not as solid, permanent and impenetrable as its imposing physicality suggests. As Jarrar puts it:

> The new objects thus also serve to redefine 'The Wall', originally a vertical object in space, built to separate humans. By moving the wall from its original place and presenting it within an artistic environment, I created a different, new function for it. The perception [is] changed, driv[ing] us to question the wall's present status and that shows the importance of seeing it from another perspective. Working on the functional possibilities may give us the ability to exceed the problem.

In the ten years since starting Whole in the Wall, Jarrar has continued this process of continually morphing the materiality of the Israeli-imposed border into new forms. He explains: 'Those objects made from the wall – the volleyball, the football, and so on – I sold them on the art market. I made money by selling those objects as art objects. They sold like hotcakes at Christmas.' Jarrar is aware that through his art – not unlike his uncle – he is also profiting from the wall, feeding an art market where 'oppression sells,' as he puts it. He continues:

> I saved the money I made from these sales in socks inside my fridge for a few years. I saved up a good amount of money, which allowed me to buy a piece of land in a village near Ramallah. I was very determined to own a piece of land as a way of liberation from the colonisation of our land and bodies. In 2016, I bought the land. At the time, the trees were so sad and the soil health was really bad. I gave love to the trees as my grandmother taught me. I used goat dung to fertilize the soil and maintained the land without any machines, trying to avoid disturbing the soil. This year [2022] was the first that I was able to harvest organic olives. In October we harvested a 60 kilos of olives. The trees gave love back (fig 4).

2 Hanna Baumann, 'The intimacy of infrastructure: vulnerability and abjection in Palestinian Jerusalem through the work of Khaled Jarrar' in *Planned Violence: Post/colonial Urban Infrastructures and Literature*, ed. by Elleke Boehmer and Dominic Davies (London: Palgrave Macmillan: 2018), 137-157.

Figure 3 Khaled Jarrar, Volleyball #1 (2013) reconstituted concrete from Apartheid Wall, diameter 20cm, weight 8kg. Barjeel Foundation.

Figure 4 Khaled Jarrar on his land in the West Bank, 2023 (image by Hanna Baumann)

Hanna Baumann & Khaled Jarrar, Morphing Forms,
Undermining Border Regimes

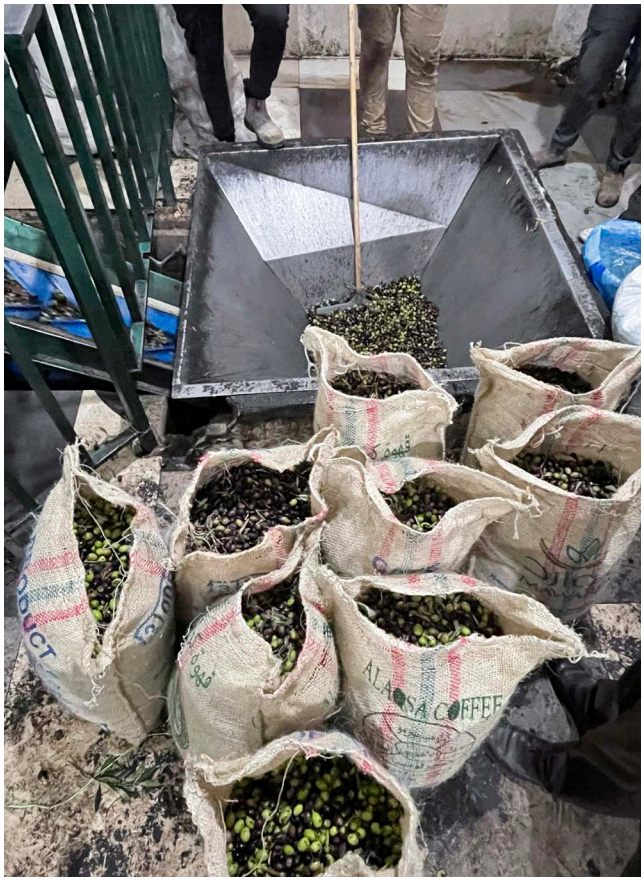
Following the principles of regenerative agriculture, Jarrar produced a small batch of Extra Virgin Olive Oil (fig 5-6). Since the land was initially bought through works made from the concrete of the Separation Wall, Jarrar views this transformation as a redemptive gesture. By acquiring land, he sought to claim back – however indirectly – the land that was taken from his grandmother. In caring for it, increasing its value by making it fertile, and making Palestinian products from it, he intervenes in and disrupts the settler-colonial cycle of expropriation and exploitation.

The next step in Jarrar's project will be to ship this oil to the United States, where he himself is emigrating. 'To avoid the bureaucracy of the US Food and Drug Administration – which would require the testing of imported oil and opening a tax file to permit its sale – I will use the first amendment to sell this product as an Art Object. I will sell it at the same price of a good olive oil in the states, with the knowledge that you can consume the content inside those canisters.'

There are thus a number of borders that this set of works crosses and indeed plays with. The olive tree is considered holy in Islam, and is central to Palestinian culture – yet the commercial labels and kitschy branding Jarrar has developed for the canisters reference the commodification of the Palestinian struggle. 'Some Palestinian olive oil producers sell oil that they bought cheaply from Palestinian farmers as "fairtrade" products. But to be honest I know the farmers in Jenin who sell to those companies and the production process is not fair at all.' The distinction between liberation and participation in ongoing oppression is also apparent in what he views as the 'selling out' of the Palestinian cause, including by the Palestinian Authority. Jarrar's work thus muddies the waters between art, commodity for import, and food product, drawing our attention to a situation where clear-cut narratives of heroism or victimhood are insufficient.

In first phase of this decade-long process, the concrete sourced from a border wall that separates people from their land served as the material for art objects that allowed the artist to purchase land, to work the land, to harvest its fruits – in short, to engage in processes of rootedness and connection in a situation marked by Palestinians' displacement, dispossession and alienation from the land. In this new phase, we see a more natural process of transformation, one that 'indigenous farmers in Palestine followed for thousands of years', as Jarrar says: from dung to fertile soil, to olive fruit and olive oil. At the border, the shape-shifting is bureaucratic rather than physical: the oil remains the same substance, but to pass through national borders, which are always semipermeable, the process is declared to be 'art', but the product is just food for consumption. 'Concrete is for your gaze, Olive oil is for your taste,' Jarrar says. Like the Palestinian 'infiltrators' who merely wish to access their homeland, but must use subterfuge and disguise to get there, the cans of oil will enter under false pretences, and these become part of the art object's identity.

Throughout the project, the forms of the artwork morph, allowing the material derived from one border to ultimately infiltrate another. In both the concrete phase and the current olive oil phase of this long chain of transformations, Jarrar thus uses the rules of the art world to turn the border regime's tools against itself.



Figures 5-6 Jarrar's olives in the press, and the resulting extra virgin olive oil (images by Khaled Jarrar)

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Hanna Baumann

Dr Hanna Baumann is an urban scholar whose work is concerned with intra-urban borders, as well as questions of exclusion and participation in cities, especially as these relate to infrastructures and the role of non-citizens. She is a Senior Research Fellow at the UCL Institute for Global Prosperity and frequently uses participatory creative approaches and artist collaborations in her work.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Khaled Jarrar

Khaled Jarrar was born in Jenin (occupied Palestine) in 1976 and lives and works in Ramallah (Palestine). He completed his studies in interior design at Palestine Polytechnic University in 1996. After his graduation, he smuggled himself to work as a carpenter in the city of Jesus living as an underground 'illegal' worker. In 1998 he joined an intensive military training and ended up working as a personal bodyguard for Palestinian President Yasser Arafat until Arafat's death in 2004. Trying to survive between the army and art, he entered the field of photography in 2004. He graduated from the International Academy of Art – Palestine, Ramallah in 2011, and obtained an MFA in fine art from the University of Arizona in 2019.

A multidisciplinary artist, Jarrar explores modern power struggles and their sociocultural impact on ordinary citizens through highly symbolic photographs, videos, film, and performative interventions. His *State of Palestine* project was featured in the 7th Berlin Biennale. *Where We Lost Our Shadows*, his filmic collaboration with Pulitzer Prize winning composer Du Yun, was shown at Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts. Jarrar's work has been featured at Maraya Art Centre, Sharjah; the New Museum, New York City; the University of Applied Arts, Vienna; the 15th Jakarta Biennale; 52nd October Salon, Belgrade; Al-Ma'mal Foundation, Jerusalem; and the London Film Festival. *Infiltrators*, Jarrar's first feature-length film, is a documentary about the business of Palestinians 'illegally' crossing and won the FIPRESCI Award for Best Documentary, Jury Special Award and the Muhr Arab Documentary Special Jury Prize at the Dubai International Film Festival in 2012. *Notes on Displacement*, his second feature-length film, about a Palestinian refugee's flight from Syria to Germany, had its world premiere at the IDFA Envision Competition in November 2022.

Jarrar's work has been highlighted by a number of international publications such as the *New Yorker, The Guardian, The Los Angeles Times, Harper's Bazaar Art, The Art Newspaper, Rolling Stone Middle East, The New Statesman* and *Creative Time Reports*, among many others.

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BORDERING PRINCIPLES AND INTEGRATION IN URBAN CONTEXT: PARALLEL INSIGHTS FROM LUND AND IRBID

Marwa Al Khalidi and
Gunnar Sandin

ABSTRACT

In this paper we reflect on how bordering processes influence architectural and urban formation in and around two cities of different geopolitical belonging. The paper emanates from a performative dialogic event, the Lund Irbid Parallel Walk, connecting one region in Europe in the city of Lund in Sweden, with another in the Middle East, in Irbid in the North of Jordan. Here, we reflect on key areas explored in our walking acts, looking at the effects of bordering processes, especially as related to newcomers' settlements in and around the two cities. By reflecting on cultural heritage areas, official government buildings, but above all areas where newcomers have settled and been placed, we trace histories, architecture, and contestations around different bordering processes, exploring how they have shifted and emerged. The geopolitical belongings of Lund and Irbid, representing a division between the Global North and South, show territorial complexities of managing housing for newcomers, especially refugees. We point at varying mechanisms of newcomers' integration in the two cities and how various types of physical and social border-formation appear.

INTRODUCTION

Through their historically conditioned multi-scalar and temporal relations, Lund and Irbid, mid-sized cities located in Europe and Middle East, show an ongoing dependency on global and multi-scalar forces of bordering. The choice to link these cities in this project addresses their position as cities conditioned by their respective locations and cultures in different parts of the world. Their geographical locations reflect the geopolitical division of 'Global North/South', connoting a colonial history of unequal socio-political conditions and exploitative economic trajectories.[1] It serves also to point out that this often-used terminology, despite making clear a colonial history, has also been criticised as stigmatising and 'inaccurate, homogenising and misleading on a global scale.' [2] Various political, discursive and artistic attempts have been made to both manifest and bridge over this global bordering of division, sometimes with contested outcomes.[3] Here, we recognize that the colonial lines of history at large have influenced how Lund and Irbid have been formed as geopolitical entities, but also that there are dilemmas that deserve to be viewed as local bordering issues in their own closer context, for instance as tied to (policies of) the cities' placing of newcomers inside or outside the denser city structure. We argue that by reflecting on cultural heritage areas, official governmental buildings and areas of newcomers' settlements in such a parallel perspective – through letting a walking and talking act inspire textual elaboration – it is possible to elevate some mechanisms in how bordering processes influence part of the architectural and urban formation of the cities. In recognition of local as well as global dynamic bordering regimes, we aim to discern the agentic spatial principles by which cities respond to historical changes, and include new populations, transforming as architectural and urban environments.

GEOPOLITICAL BACKGROUND LUND AND IRBID

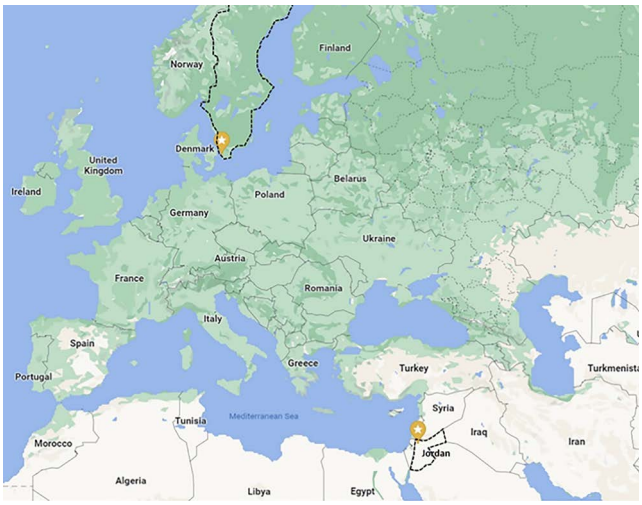

Figure 1 The geographical location of Lund and Irbid, in Europe and Middle East.

Behind the straight borderlines of Jordan in the Middle East, in comparison to the more frequent natural borderlines of Sweden in North Europe (seas, mountains, locally grown cultures), there are region-specific historical and geopolitical narratives (fig 1). In their national contexts, each of the two cities hold positions as important nodes located outside the capital region in their respective countries (fig 2). Historically, this includes relations of trading and migration to a row of neighbouring nations, important for the development of the two cities.

1 See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Library of Congress Cataloging, 1974), p. 327; Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (New York: Library of Congress Cataloging, 1994), p. 21; Faranak Miraftab and Neema Kudva, *Cities of the Global South Reader* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 3-4.

2 Dimiter Toshkov,'The 'Global South' is a Terrible Term. Don't use it!', *Research Design Matters* (2018), <http://re-design.dimiter.eu/?p=969>.

3 One example being the recent (2022) *Documenta 15*, where the difficulty of mixed curatorial attendance to singular artistic expressions in the end became also hard political stuff, forcing politicians to engage. See Kabir Jhala, "'Germany has cancelled us": as embattled Documenta 15 closes, its curators ruangrupa reflect on the exhibition – and what they would have done differently'. *The Art Newspaper*, 22 Sep 2022.

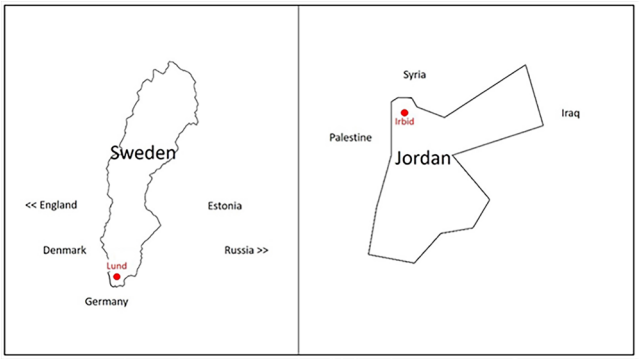

Figure 2 The positions, respectively, of Lund in Sweden and Irbid in Jordan, with noted neighbouring countries.

Irbid is located in the North of Jordan, not more than thirty kilometres from Palestine and twenty from Syria. The borders to Iraq is about 150 km away eastwards. Early maps show that Irbid's development was originally influenced by the main trade axis of Bisan-Ghor-Houran connecting the area between the Eufrat and Tigris in the East with areas across the Jordan River to the Mediterranean in the West.[4] From an administrative point of view, Irbid first became a municipality in 1887, during the Ottoman occupation.[5] A second turning point was during the period 1920-1946, when grid patterning and organizational compartmentalisation, influenced by the British advisory system, were seen as more appropriate than the historically dominant radial type of establishment, claiming that Jordan had 'little conceptual language to employ in their drive to establish sovereignty.' [6] The straight lines carried out in the colonial bordering practice failed to consider existing economic, cultural and social frontiers, and encapsulated countries such as Jordan (or what was first established as Transjordan in 1921) to become test-beds for colonial Western, or putatively 'British-style' planning principles.[7]

Lund is located in the south of Scandinavia in a peninsula which has been Swedish territory since 1658. The city is close to Denmark (to which it belonged for a period before 1658) and separated from Germany, Poland and the Baltic countries by the Östersjön (Baltic Sea). Lund has also been, more remotely linked, historically, to early Catholic England and Russia, and was declared a place of religious and political prominence via a bishopric edict in the 12th century. The territory of Lund has thus also historically been contested as part of recurrent conflicts between Sweden and Russia over Östersjön seashores and nearby land.

On closer inspection, the urban distribution of Lund and Irbid shows similarities over the overall encapsulation of districts around a fairly well-kept centre, and roads connecting to other cities and regions. Their respective histories show how forces that emerged from outside of Jordan and Sweden respectively influenced the bordering processes on a local and national level, with social, political, or material consequences. More recent events of global importance have also influenced these bordering processes. Forces like direct or nested (transnational) refugee movement, pandemics, and climate change have challenged the fixity of borders globally, instead making them into 'dynamic and creative discontinuities that play a crucial role in encouraging the multiple, complex interplay between political and territorial, as well as between cultural and identity-building processes.'[8] To study, as we do here, the bordering processes in and of cities thus requires acknowledging recent reorientations in geopolitical affairs as well as changes in everyday life practices.[9]

4 Gottlieb Schumacher, *Abila, Pilla and Northern Ajluon* (London: Alexander Watt, 1890), p. 150.

5 Eman Fraihat, 'The Historical Development of Municipality Laws in Jordan (1925-2014)', *International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies*, 3 (2016), p. 27- 81 (p. 48-49).

6 Nezar AlSayyad, 'Inclusion and Exclusion in the Arab City: Discourses on Identity and Urbanism in the Middle East', in *Sites of Pluralism: Community Politics in the Middle East*, ed. by Firat Oruc (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 117–132 (p. 119).

7 Emma Laurie and Christopher Philo, 'The Post(-) Colonial Arab City', *Space and Polity*, 24 (2020), p. 262-282 (p. 270); Stephen Ward, 'A Cultural History of Modern Urban Planning', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Planning and Culture*, ed. by Greg Young (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 37-53 (p. 41).

In quite different ways, Irbid and Lund have both been affected by the recent Syrian war complex, which started in 2012 and is ongoing as we write this in 2023, albeit with reduced operations since 2017. While Jordan has, since the beginning of the war, experienced its effects and received large numbers of people fleeing Syria, Sweden started experiencing the effects in 2015-2016, as did many other European nations, during the most intense war period. Lund received around 3000 Syrian refugees, a number considered extreme by locals but falling well short of the 127 000 registered Syrian refugees absorbed by Irbid.[10] The sudden increase in Sweden (even if small compared to Jordan) of people fleeing Syria made the Social Democratic government abandon one of their core principles: the long lasting, newcomer-friendly, so-called Swedish welfare model. Instead, they introduced a restricted immigration policy performed at national borders, as well as more restricted housing policies.[11]

In the light of transnational as well as regional conditions, we reflect in the following on how bordering processes were enacted and materialised locally and how they stand in relation to architectural/urban formation patterns in Lund and Irbid. We address how bordering forces in local decisions tied to physical space produce similarity as well as differentiation between city parts. Before expanding on these patterns, we give a brief view of the walking act that preceded and inspired this paper.

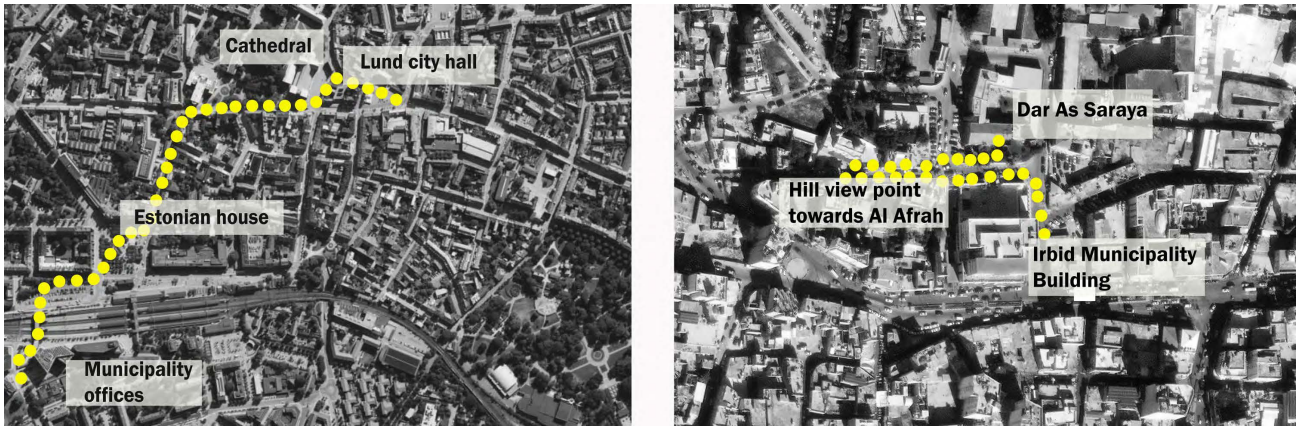

Figure 3 Rough pre-sketched walking route schemas, and trans-dialogic spots in the two cities.

8 Anssi Paasi, 'Border Studies Reanimated: Going Beyond the Territorial/Relational Divide', *Environment and Planning A*, 44 (2012), p. 2303–2309 (p. 2303); Chris Rumford, 'Towards a Multiperspectival Study of Borders', *Geopolitics*, 17 (2012), p. 887-902 (p. 893); Nira Yuval-Davis, George Weymyss and Kathryn Cassidy, *Bordering* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019), p. 4-5.

9 James Sidaway, 'The Return and Eclipse of Border Studies? Charting Agendas', *Geopolitics*, 16 (2011), p. 969–976 (p. 970).

10 Lunds Kommun, 'Invandring, integration och nyanlända' [Immigration, integration and newcomers], January 2022, <https://lund.se/kommun-och-politik/fakta-om-lund/invandring-integration-och-nyanlanda>. Total numbers of Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2022/ August): Situation Syria Regional Refugee Response <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/syria/location/43>.

11 Helmersson, Katarina 'Invandring och den svenska modellen i fokus vid Löfvens tal'. [Immigration and the Swedish model at focus in Löfven's speech]. *Sveriges Radio*, 2016. Received 2022-03-22 from: <https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/6388727>.

A MULTI-AGENTIC PERFORMATIVE METHOD FOR ARTICULATING URBAN STORIES

On 12 September 2020, the two authors of this article staged a synchronised walking and talking act, by each inviting one friend to participate in a dialogic event using a video broadcast application, connecting Lund with Irbid in real time and hence Northern Europe (Sweden) with the Middle East (Jordan). The four individuals walked and talked in a manner, communicating what they encountered along two chosen routes to each other (and to an online audience of approximately twenty).[12]

The walking act was conceived as an artistic and experimental connection of two geopolitical spheres with a situated exchange of histories and narratives. The spots chosen for the cities' routes had been roughly discussed by the performers beforehand. Certain key places, such as official governmental buildings, and other nearby places of cultural heritage prominence, were chosen as preliminary spots of dialogue (fig 3), leading to discussions of 'difference' that ultimately came to inform this paper's extended reflections on borders and directions in urban transformation. Through this walking act, each performer invited the fellow walkers and the connected audience to a collective engagement with the visited places, methodologically reminiscent of the early Situationist *dérive* of the 1960s, for the investigation of the built environment guided by spontaneous attraction of the encountered places. In our case, we stuck to agreed routes, letting the dialogic narrative expand. Some original Situationist drifting sessions made use of walkie-talkies to create a collective experience, an inspirational feature which we build on and interpret through the use of contemporary telecommunication technology, allowing distance viewers/listeners.[13] We also draw on a wealth of post-Situationist art walking acts aimed at producing a critical reflection on architectonic moderation of societal circumstances, including new types of artistic methods and media.[14] Our walk act kept certain elements of autoethnographic accounts of walking as a method to discover the impact of physical urban space, acknowledging also that 'walks with video can be seen as forms of place-making'.[15] In our case the temporal, verbal, and peripatetic communication created a common narrative and a temporal discursive place, which revealed urban and architectural relationships between the two cities, as well as bordering principles within each city.

The chosen spots, such as official governmental buildings and their nearby places, raise interesting questions from a representative point of view and in relation to the spaces they bordered to: What kind of spaces with no official representative power would catch our attention as heterotopically reflecting the governmental history of the two cities? And how can such bordering, such socially divided adjacency, as it were, be articulated by attending specifically to architectural and urban planning space? These became leading questions for us in the walk as well as in this paper. The preparation of the broadcasted event, just as the walk act itself and our analysis of it, thus came to drive our attention towards social contrasts in the two cities, pointing out areas and describing where and how newcomers, especially refugees, were forced or had the choice to settle.

12 Marwa Al Khalidi was accompanied by Aya Musmar in Irbid, and Gunnar Sandin was accompanied by Kajsa Lawaczeck Körner in Lund. The event was announced as such at the art gallery AURA Krognoshuset, with the title 'Lund-Irbid walk talk', 2020 <https://www.krognoshuset.se/aura/program/> [accessed 16 June 2023].

13 Kristin Ross, 'Lefebvre on the Situationists. An interview', *October* Vol. 79, Winter, MIT press, Mass. (1997), p. 69-83 (p. 79).

14 Such as, among numerous others, Apolonija Sustercic in a walk-and-talk session along the commercial streets of Malmö, 2002, with architect Tomas Wikström (Galleri Signal archive, Malmö), or Janet Cardiff's several aural walks with head-phones guiding the listener/walker. For a recollection of Situationist and post-Situationist techniques, including those of Francis Alÿs, see Gunnar, Sandin, 'Modalities of Place: On polarization and exclusion' (doctoral thesis, Lund University, 2003), p. 56-61, digitally available at <https://www.academia.edu/60585175/Modalities_of_Place_On_Polarisation_and_Exclusion_in_Concepts_of_Place_and_in_Site_Specific_Art>.

15 Sarah Pink, 'Walking with video', *Visual Studies*, 22 (2007), p. 240-252 (p. 249); For autoethnographic walking with camera, see also Kajsa Lawaczeck Körner, 'Walking Along, Wandering Off and Going Astray' (doctoral thesis, Lund University, 2016), pp. 30- 32, digitally available at <https://lucris.lub.lu.se/ws/portalfiles/portal/5452796/8812575.pdf>.

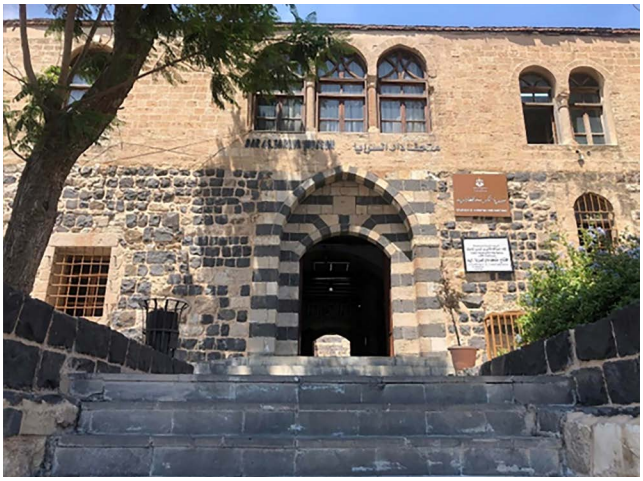

Figure 4 A view from the main facade of Dar As Saraya. Photo main author.

Figure 5 A photograph of Lund City Hall (Stadshallen). Photo co- author.

Figure 6 Images from the hilltop area of Irbid, including the main municipality building. Photo main author.

ROUTES REFLECTING BORDERING AND INTEGRATION IN TWO URBAN CONTEXTS

LUND: STARTING AT THE MUNICIPALITY BUILDING IN THE CITY CENTRE

In Lund, the route starts at Stadshallen, the City Hall, which has hosted the municipality board meetings since 1968. Apart from the original meeting room, a grand assembly hall (fig 5), used for public events like concerts, was once considered one of the largest indoor conference arenas in Scandinavia. During a recent and protracted renovation, 2014-2022, the board meetings moved to a newly built municipality office building called Kristallen (the Crystal), located at the other side of the railroad dividing the city.

By the end of 2022, the municipality board meetings returned to the Stadshallen, now instead taking place in the large previous conference/concert hall. Behind this central building a small road, a walking path, leads to the nearby Lund Cathedral.

IRBID: DEPARTING FROM THE HISTORICAL HILLTOP CENTRE

In Irbid, the route starts at the historical centre of Irbid, in the hilltop area where the first urban settlements were formed in order to collect rain water needed for agriculture.[16] At the hilltop lies the Dar As Saraya building, (fig 4). In 1851 the building was established as a residence for one of the Ottoman rulers, and in 1886 it was turned into a women's prison.[17] In 1994, the Jordanian Department of Antiquities adapted the building's rooms to host a historical museum.

The current main municipality building, erected in 1990, also lies in the hilltop area (fig 6). This four-storey building has entrances on both its north and south sides. Its exterior design recalls a generic Arabic modernism with white concrete facades and vaulted or rectangular rows of windows. The daily use of buildings like this one – and in times of renovation, its nearby replacements – participates in the decision-making of how a city changes by its mere material and spatial presence and its own layout (assembly halls, offices, corridors, staircase, etc).[18]

The symbolic value of sovereignty tied to the central location of Dar As Saraya, together with the municipality building at the hilltop, constitutes a spatial demarcation operating as an ongoing bordering apparatus of differentiation from the rest of the city. The hilltop buildings convey a sense of panoptic surveillance based on how the hilltop expresses a historical sense of protection and defence, where the Dar As Saraya building itself shows an encapsulating shape, small openings, and solid materiality.[19] The physical borders of the hilltop with its buildings' spatial and material form today also encapsulate an isolated territorial meaning, separating it out from its flat surroundings.[20] The population density close to the slope of the hill shows abrupt, site-specific variations, additionally making this into an area of stark social and material contrasts.

16 Tarawneh and Naamneh, 'Urbanization and Social Identities in Jordan: The Case of Irbid', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 42 (2011), p. 615- 635 (p. 621); Eugene Rogan, 'Bringing the State Back: The Limits of Ottoman Rule in Jordan, 1840–1910', in *Village, Steppe and State: The Social Origins of Modem Jordan*, ed. by Eugene Rogan and Tariq Tell (London: British Academic Press, 1994), pp. 32–57 (p. 36).

17 Ahmad Alzouby and Ahmed Attia, 'Reviving the Traditional House Architecture in Irbid City, Jordan', *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning*, 17 (2022), p. 147-155 (p. 149).

18 Marwa Al Khalidi, 'Influential moments in city planning meetings: A study of decision-making situations in a Jordanian municipality' (doctoral thesis, Lund University, 2018), pp. 155-158, digitally available at <https://lup.lub.lu.se/search/files/51347857/Influential_Moments_in_City_Planning_Meetings_A_Study_of_Decision_Making_Situations_in_a_Jordanian_Municipality.pdf>

19 Natalia Ribas-Mateos and Timothy J. Dunn, *Handbook on Human Security, Borders and Migration* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2021), p. 7.

20 Marc Schoonderbeek, 'Complexity and Simultaneity. The Border as Spatial Condition', *Territorio*, 72 (2015), pp. 95-100 (p. 96).

LUND – HISTORICAL AND CURRENT DIRECTIONS

As regards the historic buildings of Lund, the cathedral maintains a stable position as a central node in, and symbolic value of the city. Lund is simply known for its cathedral, as it is for its university. For centuries, Lund has been the only university in southern Sweden. Today, the city expands along a northeast axis, where large-scale science research facilities and university departments are establishing new types of learning territories.[21] The university is a magnet for international students and researchers, and represents a type of high-esteem internationalisation in the city. The larger neighbouring city of Malmö, known for its wider and less controlled form for internationalisation, has one of the largest percentage of immigrant population of all cities in Sweden at 48 % (second generation counted).[22] The issue of immigration's part in city planning has here be seen as an omittance of support of the spatial needs and architecturally innovative solutions for newcomers' activities.[23]

A less well-known place of immigration, close to the university area and along the route in Lund, is the Estonian House (fig 8). This building formerly contained a school for female students, and was restored in 1971 to serve exiled Estonians in southern Sweden. The place is modestly walled and gated towards the streets, but publicly accessible on request.

Figure 7 Dar As Saraya courtyard, in Irbid hilltop area. Photo main author.

21 Mattias Kärrholm and Albena Yaneva, 'Big Science and Urban Morphogenesis', in *Co-curating the City, Universities and Urban Heritage Past and Future*, ed. by Clare Melhuish, Henric Benesch, Dean Sully, and Ingrid Martins Holmberg (London: UCL Press, 2022), pp. 200-220 (p. 201).

22 SCB [Statistics Sweden] 2023-03-22, https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter amne/befolkning/befolkningens-sammansattning/befolkningsstatistik/.

23 For a reflection of this omittance, see Katarina Nylund, 'Conceptions of Justice in the Planning of the New Urban Landscape –Recent Changes in the Comprehensive Planning Discourse in Malmö Sweden.' *Planning Theory and Practice*, 15 (2014), pp. 41-61 (p. 42). See also Laleh Foroughanfar, The Street of Associations: Migration and the Infrastructural (Re)Production of Norra Grängesbergsgatan, Malmö. (doctoral thesis, Lund University, 2022), pp. 79, digitally available at <https://lucris.lub.lu.se/ws/portalfiles/portal/119948733/The_Street_of_Associations_Laleh_Foroughanfar.pdf>

Figure 8 Image of Estonian House in Lund. Photo co-author.

Some Estonians who came to Sweden after the end of World War II were extradited to the Soviet Union, together with other Balts, mostly Latvians, on request by Soviets claiming the soldiers had been on the German side in the Second World War.[24] This extradition decision, followed by jailing in the Soviet Union, was catastrophic for the former soldiers, in some cases causing their deaths before or just after arriving at the post-war camps.[25] Fifty years later, in 1994, the King of Sweden and the Minister of Foreign Affairs made an official apology on behalf of the nation. This house and its narrative recalls a Swedish border dilemma, namely the long-lasting period of claimed but also contested or 'outmoded' neutrality politics, a virtually impossible stance abruptly changing in 2022 with Sweden's application for NATO membership.[26]

AXES OF MOVEMENT – ANCIENT BORDERS AND RECENT SETTLEMENTS IN LUND

From the early Middle Ages, there was both political and religious influence on Scandinavian culture, and one part of this connection was the decision by Danish and English kings and bishops in the 11th century, to place Lund under a bishopric authority on the east-west Catholic axis (partly mirroring a north-south one relating instead to Germany), leading to a change of representative power but also to new (types of) settlements in the region, including stone built cathedrals.[27] Today, a main force of population change is instead related to newcomers fleeing war zones, such as refugees from the recent years of conflict in Syria, and the even more recent Ukrainian diaspora. Lund has received a significant part of the Swedish distribution of UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) refugee quota, met with resistance from locals in part due to new housing developments with ethnically mixed neighbourhoods, especially at the peripheries of Lund.

Figure 9 Map showing the location of the three suburbs with Lund municipality's refugee's housing

24 Dick Harrison, 'Vilka var det som Lämnades ut i Baltutlämningen?' ['Who were the Ones Extradited in the Balt Extradition?'] *Svenska Dagbladet*, 2016-03-11.

25 Curt Ekholm. *Balt- och tyskutlämningen 1945-1946*. [The Balt and German Extradition 1945-46], Uppsala, Sweden: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Studia Historica Upsaliensia 136 (224 pp.), 137 (444 pp.), 1984.

26 *Debatt I Lund*, public debate at Lund University, 3 March 2022 on "Yes or no to NATO-membership."

27 Maria Cinthio, 'Lund från första början' ['Lund's origins'], in Cinthio, (ed.), *Vägar mot Lund* [Eng: *Roads towards Lund*: an anthology about the rise of the city, its early development, and the contract for the large stone buildings], (Lund: Historiska Media, 2018), pp. 9-123.

The bordering processes of the recent newcomers and their inhabitation of housing has unfolded differently, responding to shifting policies and political climates. At first, housing was quick-fix, low-quality buildings, made by profit-driven developers. Thereafter, following a change in Swedish law allowing 'temporary' residencies to exist on a longer term, the municipality started 'Livskonceptet' (The Life Concept), a project which signalled an intention to create a socially and existentially sustainable condition in three suburbs east of the centre city of Lund (Linero, Dalby and Veberöd), (fig 9).[28]

In Linero, apartments are clustered in temporary, two-storey modules, each housing eighty refugees, close to a rural landscape with agrarian grounds, segregated from other housing (fig 10). In the nearby village of Dalby, a similar number of blocks are developed but integrated more permanently in an ethnically mixed district. In Veberöd, a more distant suburb, the site initially identified for development (twenty-four apartments) had to be relocated from a central location in the suburb to an area with no existing housing. The decision came after local protests arguing the new development would threaten recreational facilities. In the overarching Life Concept project, the Swedish multinational company, IKEA, was commissioned to design domestic interiors and public areas, signalling an overwhelming IKEA-ish interior design typology with bright light colours and minimalist construction, as if taken from a catalogue of things with no authentic cultural abode.

In Linero, the refugee housing becomes itself a 'border establishment,' marking the end of the denser city of Lund. In Dalby, an ancient village once rivalling Lund for the most important church, the recent newcomer establishment is a courtyard block (fig 10) hemmed in by villas and formally segregated, sticking out as slightly higher and less architecturally sophisticated, stigmatised rather than fully integrated as a natural physical and social belonging. In the Veberöd case the old (no longer working) railroad that bound the suburban village now becomes a border (marker), separating newcomers from the established locals. Apart from the scattered, distant sites and underwhelming design, the projects are defined by their ready-made conceptions of what a home is, including the IKEA interiors, and becoming bordering practices in themselves. Even if intended as a support for integration, the municipality decisions risk becoming 'technologies of separation' due to their one-sided choice of architectural setting.[29]

Figure 10 Three municipality-governed settlements for newcomers in Lund, from left: Temporary module apartments in Linero; Temporary module apartments in Veberöd; Image of courtyard in permanent housing block, Dalby. Photo co-author.

28 LKF, 'Så hjälper LKF kommunen att ordna bostäder' ['How the municipal residency company LKF helps refugees to residences'], *72 Kvadrat LKFs kundtidning* 2017:1, <https://lkf.inpublix.com/72kvadrat-2017-1/sa-hjalper-lkf-kommunen-att-ordna-flyktingbostader/>. By 'existential sustainability' we here refer to the meaning-bearing factors in sustainability concepts discussed recently as involving for instance psychological and theological aspects. In relation to architecture, see the contribution: Ida Sandström and Sandra Kopljar, 'Existential Sustainability: An investigation of Loneliness and Belonging in Relation to Sustainable Housing', abstract to the conference 'Hope and meaning for a sustainable life', introduction by Marianne Loor, Lund University, 2022. <https://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/article/hope-and-meaning-sustainable-life>

29 Nishat Awan, 'Introduction to Border Topologies', *GeoHumanities*, 2 (2016), pp. 279-283 (p. 279).

30 Terminologies like refugees, asylum seekers or 'persons of concern' have been used to indicate different political attribution and entitlements of newcomers' type of relation to the hosting countries. See Charles Simpson and Agyead Abo Zayed, 'New Faces, Less Water, and a Changing Economy in a Growing City. A Case Study of Refugees in Towns, Irbid, Jordan', *Refugees in Towns*, (Boston: Feinstein International Centre, 2015), pp. 3-55, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/599720dc59cc68c3683049bc/t/5d35ec3ec4bce20001ed9028/1563815012312/RIT+Report+Irbid.pdf>; Ribas-Mateos and Dunn, *Handbook on Human Security, Borders and Migration*, p. 2.

NEW AND OLD SETTLEMENTS IN IRBID

Irbid has been one of the major cities providing a home to newcomers of different national origins: Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, and Sudanese who fled to Jordan for fear of personal security and declining infrastructure in their original countries, food resources, health facilities, or economic possibilities.[30] Syrians and Palestinians have benefited, in some cases, from 'tribal and familial connections that existed throughout the region from before the modern borderlines were drawn in the 20th century.'[31]

Figure 11 A view from Irbid hilltop towards Al Afrah neighbourhood.

IRBID AND BORDERS SLOWLY VANISHING

The walking act that initiated this study led us to address two newcomers' settlements in Irbid. The first one is the 1951 Palestinian camp shaped and organised by the UNRWA (The United Nations Relief and Works Agency) in the western part of the city. The second is the Al Afrah neighbourhood (fig 11), appropriated by Syrian newcomers in the south-west district of the city. In these two settlements, the internal and external forces of the bordering processes are different, as regards how the spaces became inhabited and who or what enacted the borderscapes in each milieu.[32]

In 1951 the Palestinian camp was established on an area of one-fourth square kilometre. Viewing the camp's location within the borders of Irbid, and reflecting on its geographical location in relation to the western border of Jordan (shared with Palestine), one may assume an attempt to maintain the physical proximity of the camp's residents to their home country. At the beginning, the camp consisted of tents, which by 1954 were replaced by mud shelters. Over the years, the camp's dwellings turned to small, permanent buildings to host 4 000 Palestinians. Between the two Palestinian-Israeli wars of 1949 and 1967, Irbid received and held Palestinian newcomers, who gained different rights depending on the year of their arrival, for instance in relation to the state of diplomatic relationships at the time, but also in relation to their matrilineal or patrilineal descent.[33]

31 Simpson and Abo Zayed, 'New Faces, Less Water, and a Changing Economy in a Growing City. A Case Study of Refugees in Towns, Irbid, Jordan', 2015, p. 5.

32 Suvendrini Perera, 'A Pacific Zone? (In) Security, Sovereignty, and Stories of the Pacific Borderscape', in *Borderscapes: Hidden Geographies and Politics and Territory's Edge*, ed. by Pre Kumar Rajaram and Carl Grundy-Warr (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), pp. 201-227 (p. 206).

33 UNRWA, 'Irbid Camp' <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan/irbid-camp> [accessed 6 September 2022].

34 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: University Press, 1998) pp. 169-170. For an elaborated artistic research on the temporal development of the cultural, physical and existential borders of Palestinian camps, following Agamben's view of the refugee as destabilising the normal nation-state, see, Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti, *Refugee Heritage*, (Stockholm: Art and Theory Publishing, 1921), p.28.

35 UNRWA, 'Irbid Camp' <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/jordan/irbid-camp>.

In his conception about the camp as a 'space of exception,' Agamben reads it as 'a piece of land placed outside the normal juridical order' – and quite literally such a juridical exception generated the borders of the camp in Irbid in 1951, turning it into a permanent state of exception located 'outside' and 'inside' the city's borders.[34] As time passed, the space of the camp and the space of the city have become indistinguishable. The 1951 camp nowadays resembles 'some of the urban quarters in Irbid.'[35] Even if a clear, physical separation between the camp and urban context could still be found, the architectural remains have slowly disappeared as social borders, fading into the dense urban fabric of Irbid.[35]

The effect of the plethora of internal and transnational relations have been shifting over the years transforming the architectural and urban status of the camp. Nowadays, some local nuances of power can be sensed by the inhabitants of the camp, speaking the agency of its original status.[36]

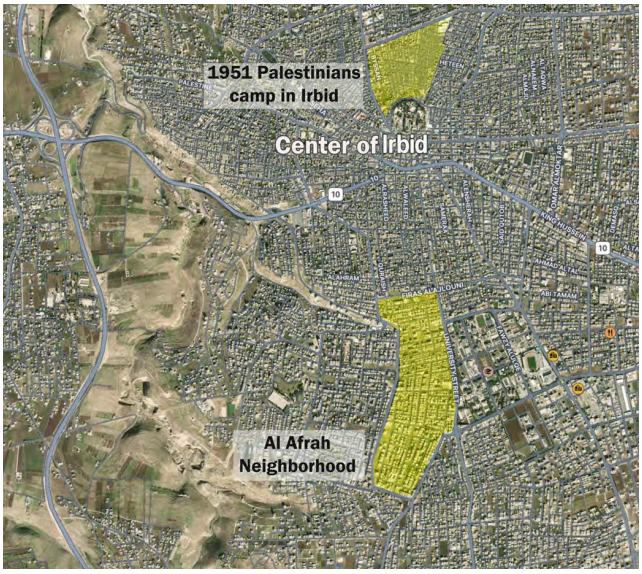

Figure 12 Location of two newcomers' settlements in Irbid: the 1951 camp area, and the Al Afrah neighbourhood.

36 Romola Sanyal, 'Squatting in camps: Building and insurgency in spaces of refuge', *Urban Studies*, 48 (2010), pp. 877–890 (p. 880).

37 Simpson and Abo Zayed, 'New Faces, Less Water, and a Changing Economy in a Growing City. A Case Study of Refugees in Towns, Irbid, Jordan', (Boston: Feinstein International Centre), 2015, p. 11.

38 In 2020, Syrians amounted to 15.7% of Irbid's entire population. Sattam Al Shogoor et al, 'Evaluating the Impact of the Influx of Syrian Refugees on Land Use/ Land Cover Change in Irbid District, Northwestern Jordan', *Land*, 11 (2022), pp. 372- 384, (p. 374).

39 Prem Kumar Rajaram and Carl Grundy-Warr, *Borderscapes Hidden Geographies and Politics at Territory's* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. xi.

40 Yuval-Davis, Weymyss and Cassidy, *Bordering* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019), p. 39.

IRBID AND INTEGRATED SETTLEMENTS

The year 2012 witnessed the outbreak of the Syrian war complex, and 40 000 Syrians arrived in Irbid.[37] By 2015, large neighbourhoods were inhabited by more Syrians who were classified as 'persons of concern,' displacing native Jordanians, like in Al Afrah.[38]

The Al Afrah neighbourhood (fig 12) is classified by Irbid municipality as a 'type C', low income residential area. It has a central location in the city, near Yarmouk University Street and other locations with social and economic characteristics that have supported the integration of Syrians via 'means of production, distribution, and financing' which also 'enact a form of foreclosure.'[39]

The bordering process differs between the 1951 camp and the Al Afrah neighbourhood. A couple of years had to pass before the Palestinian newcomers performed independent agency to urbanise, perform, and resist the bordering forces imposed by the UNRWA and the Jordanian government, for instance: replacing tent structures with more stable shelter buildings. In contrast, in the Al Afrah neighbourhood, Syrian newcomers adapted their neighbourhoods as soon as they started to settle, due to economic and social struggles, but without the need to face or fear extrinsic threats. Since 2012, the bordering forces mobilised by the Syrian newcomers themselves have been essential in enacting the political project of their new belonging.[40] While security measures and directives from nongovernmental organisations and the Jordanian government defined the material bordering of the Palestinian areas in 1951, the features of cultural resemblance pursuing normal life were more defining characters in the Al Afrah area. Despite the differences as regards the character of integration, these patterns of de-bordering, displacing, adjustment and elimination of physical differences, tied to daily life processes, continues to be influential as integrational attempts in the society.

41 Nash and Reid, 'Border Crossings: New Approaches to the Irish Border', *Irish Studies Review*, 18 (2010), pp.265- 284 (p. 267); Gabriel Popescu, *Bordering and Ordering the Twenty-first Century, Understanding Borders*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers) p. 18; Barry Smith and Achille C. Varzi, 'Fiat and Bona Fide Boundaries', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 60 (2000), pp. 401-420 (p. 402).

42 Gunnar Sandin, 'Spatial Renewal and Lost Voices', in *UIA23 conference: Sustainable futures—Leave no one behind/Design for Inclusivity*, (Copenhagen, 2023).

43 See Aya Musmar, 'Witnessing as a Feminist Spatial Practice: Encountering the Refugee Camp Beyond Recognition' (doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield, 2020), p. 9.

DISTINGUISHING BORDERING PRINCIPLES IN URBAN FORMATION

In this study, a 'parallel walking act' played a catalytic role as an attempt to overbridge the often-stated geopolitical zoning of a Global North and South. Extending on the walking act, we have here discussed similarities and differences related to bordering processes and their spatial formations, especially the distribution of newcomers' settlements and how they manifest in relation to international forces along the two cities' histories. The bordering processes in Lund and Irbid's regional histories show, as in many other places, the double meaning of defined state territorial boundaries (historical formations), and the everyday maintenance of both material and 'fiat' boundaries, 'silently' existing as symbolic and social lines of exclusion and inclusion.[41] We have specifically seen how local urban characteristics may encourage or prevent inclusion, and how this is differently exposed in the two cities. Questions related to urban extension and integration guided the analysis, and these questions can also be seen as generalizable for guiding urban design and planning practices, especially as regards temporary or permanent housing for newcomers. The questions are as follows: To what extent are both the original residents and the future holders of new settlements included in the planning?[42] Who is openly listened to and acknowledged? How are borderlines-to-be (in and around new settlements) negotiated and contested by different actors? Or put in more proactive wording: To what extent is it possible to figure out, together, what type of architectural solutions fit families, individuals, and cultures, if unnecessary borders are to be avoided? Which type of architectural solutions do not fit? We have seen here how the more detailed housing design has formative bordering agency, and how in municipal refugee housing, there is a risk that the wishes of newcomers are not consulted.

In relation to the Global North and South, we have seen, apart from the immense difference in numbers of received refuges in the two regions here studied, that certain mechanisms of placement and integration appear. On the whole, however, we have seen how geopolitical relations of a more regional kind, related to old trading routes, long-standing border conflicts, similarities and differences regarding religion, or fluctuating defence coalition politics have had, and still have, influence for the development of cities.

When it comes to the distribution of housing, and the territorialisation related to these settlements, there are varying local governmental intentions and living conditions. Without engaging with situated knowledge of the life and demands of refugees, we have argued the importance of conceptualising bordering processes as enacting belonging, as well as allowing self-governing.[43] The examples here have shown bordering processes enacted in physical locations and urban characteristics that afford new settlements by stimulating – or not – daily activities for newcomers. We conclude by a description of these effects of bordering.

Geographical location has an evident role to play in the 'number of bodies, discourses, and relationships that highlight […] shifts,' deciding to what degree newcomers can be integrated and cities allowed to expand.[44] For instance, for Syrians, the proximity to Jordan has been a natural decisive factor. Distance is, however, one factor alongside self-organisation. The urban characteristics of the receiving city may

44 Chiara Brambilla, 'Exploring the Critical Potential of the Borderscapes Concept', *Geopolitics*, 20 (2015), pp. 14–34 (p. 19); Aya Musmar and Ann- Christin Zuntzn, 'Hospitality and violence. Writing for irresolution', in *The Entanglements of Ethnographic Fieldwork in a Violent World*, ed. by Nerina Weiss, Erella Grassiani and Linda Green (Oxon: Routledge, 2023), pp. 150-167 (p. 150).

45 Nishat Awan, 'Introduction to Border Topologies', *GeoHumanities*, 2 (2016), pp. 279-283 (p. 279)

In the Al Afrah case in Irbid, in contrast, the neighbourhood showed fewer governmental interventions at the same time as local commercial infrastructure afforded more natural and self-governed acts of bordering, thus shaping a local but open community.

In conclusion, we suggest that the spatial integration of migrants can be described in three types of bordering principles: *encapsulating*, *scattering* and *displacing*. The hyper-simplified architectural module-housing in Lund can be described as an encapsulating activity, whereas the location of particular newcomers' houses in outer areas or in architectonically deviant neighbourhoods can be described as scattering and displacing of groups of newcomers. In Irbid, the borders demarcating Palestinian camps in the 1950s represent displacing and encapsulating, and they were only slowly transformed into an integrated part of the city. The process for the Syrians in Al Afrah operated at a faster pace, stimulating a partial bordering and integration of groups and their everyday social needs by letting a more natural and spontaneous – but still not competition-free – displacing take place.

These bordering principles can be seen as influencing city formation and expansion in several ways. As agentic parts in the ever-returning negotiations of lived urban space, these three principal types of bordering processes address, and may help to modulate, the dichotomies of: insideness versus outsideness, control versus freedom, and familiarity versus differentiating.

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Marwa Al Khalidi is an assistant professor at Architectural Engineering Department, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan. She completed her PhD studies at Lund university, Sweden. She has an educational background in relation to Architectural Engineering, and Urban Planning Studies. Her interdisciplinary research covers the intersecting fields of architecture, urban studies and sociology. Her PhD investigated city planning processes, focusing on the socio-material perspective within official meeting rooms. This perspective allowed her to examine the intricate interactions between various human and nonhuman actors, and their influence on the decision-making processes. Her current research interests are twofold. The first strand examines forms of influence of material objects and architectural elements in the context of institutional buildings. This research also addresses various forms of participation and governance of marginalized voices of human and nonhuman actors. The second strand of her current research investigates everyday urban incidents from a socio-material and temporal perspective within different cities. She explores incidents of urban interest through sensing, observing and analysing reflecting on her own culture. In her work, she includes interdisciplinary research methods, such as socio-material agency studies, organizational studies, and ethnographic observation of everyday planning practices and the architecture of institutional buildings.

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A LUNAR PERSPECTIVE (AN EXCERPT)

Eloise Maltby Maland

ABSTRACT

This is an excerpt from *A Lunar Perspective*: a piece of writing and performance that travels through irregular orbits around Lunar House, a Home Office Visa and Immigration building, to question our practices of mapping, bordering and othering.

Weaving together voices from different writers and thinkers across disciplines and positions, the project steps in to understand the materiality of Lunar House as a site of the enactment of the border and steps out to consider and critique our current politics and practices of othering. *A Lunar Perspective* reflects on the reality of violence at, of, for and with the border, recognising the continued practice of hostile environment policies within the UK.

Understanding a map as a way of situating in relation to others, *A Lunar Perspective* becomes a map of words, taking language as a practice of cartography. Our languages, our words themselves, are maps of their own journeys, travelling through linguistic roots and resurfacing in partially remembered or imagined times and places. This collection of words, growing from and rooted within my own positionality, becomes a tentative, unfixed map, sloshing like water, in a state of continually shifting relations.

endlessly trying to read the immigration acts

getting lost in the words

the order of sections

the text a map of sorts

defining, outlining

legislation conjuring[1] the border into being

an attempt at fixity

trying to pin down the earth, the soil, the people

I venture out again

this time protected by google earth

past *lunar house*[2]

and out to another version of the border

the sea

imagined as a clean line

the bodies of land and sea touching but distinct

the image is quickly disrupted

instead the land

the border

is porous

water weaving through

tentacles entwining with the land

legislation conjuring :

These words come from Felix Bazalgette as he writes about the histories and lives of Harmondsworth Immigration Removal Centre, 'sandwiched between an airport and a motorway.' He writes that 'legislation conjured the detention centre into being, and gathered people from all around the world inside it.'

From Felix Bazalgette, 'Home Is Always a Ship', *Failed States*, no. 3: refuge (March 2019), pp. 14–29 (p. 18).

lunar house :

Lunar House is a Home Office Visa and Immigration building in Croydon, London. Inside, visa applications and asylum screenings take place. As a front line of UK immigration policies, Lunar House is a site where the border is explicitly practiced and performed. Built in 1970, Lunar House was named to celebrate the moon landing the year before. This piece of writing travels through irregular orbits around Lunar House, weaving together voices from different writers and thinkers to create a tentative, unfixed map, sloshing like water, in a state of continually shifting relations.

entranced with the image

I leave my word document and google earth behind

and travel out to stand

feet planted

in the mud[3]

at the edge where earth touches ocean[4]

my feet slowly sinking into the space
between geographic bodies

the mud a space of *translation and transition*[5]

between water and land

standing here

my body scaled beside the geographic one[6]

looking out to the water

my neck slowly going red under the sun

my skin blushing as I gaze out

in the mud :

This particular mud is on the Isle of Grain, where the Thames and the Medway meet the sea and one of the closest sea/land borders to Lunar House. The Isle of Grain has many histories layered between its marshlands and water edges. The land – through Roman occupation, Saxon settlements, Dutch raids, two world wars – has seen the coming and going of: sea walls to drain the marshes for pastureland; the extraction of its gravel, salt and sand; military batteries and forts; anti-submarine nets; military training, experimental, firing and demolition ranges; seaplane bases; anti-tank sea defences; oil refineries; power stations; landing points for undersea power cables; petrochemical plants; container ports and homes. The remains of these agricultural, industrial and military stories are left behind and imprinted within the muddy land.

at the edge where earth touches ocean :

Standing at a different edge to my own, these words come from Gloria Anzaldúa as she writes:

Wind tugging at my sleeve / feet sinking into the sand / I stand at the edge where earth touches ocean / where the two overlap / a gentle coming together / at other times and places a violent clash.

From Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* (San Francisco: Spinters / Aunt Lute Book Company, 1987), p. 1.

translation and transition :

These words are from Adam Kleinman as he uses this phrase to reflect the shifting nature of an intertidal zone 'between that which was and that which may come next.' The intertidal zone he speaks to is in the archipelago of Lofoten in Norway and I came to this phrase in reading his review of an art festival taking place there. Although the context of his writing is other than my own, his words resonate with the character of this place between land and water that I find myself in and help me to better understand it.

From Adam Kleinman, 'Lofoten International Art Festival 2019', *Art Agenda* (20 September 2019) <https://www.art-agenda.com/features/288779/lofoten-international-art-festival-2019>.

my body scaled beside the geographic one :

Karlo Mila's words travelled through to reach these ones, as she writes:

my throat / an estuary / salt crystallizing / on the tip of my tongue / my veins / become / rivers that flow / straight out to sea

From Karlo Mila, 'Oceania', *New Internationalist*, 521 (October 2019), p. 31.

at the amorphous shifting body separating

this territory from that

the water

a temporal body[7]

where borders are difficult to trace, to grasp, to see[8]

it confounds attempts at fixity[9]

looking down at my feet

the geographic border appears a naïve one

at times

the type you might colour in as a child

but that doesn't quite encompass

its hidden complexities

seeping in and around corners

and yet still a physical reality

the waves

dividing you from me

a temporal body :

These words are from Ally Bisshop as she writes:

The wave is a temporal body; a fluid movement – that of waving. It crests in the same gesture in which it falls, scissoring the surface of the ocean body as it quivers its bowels. The wave|waving is the unquiet interval between form and movement, between the push and the suck, between being made and unmade, between all the mirrored pulses of invention and dissolution. And, it is in this interval that all of the atoms of possibility are marbled together into new and unsteady forms.

From Ally Bisshop, *Marble* (A Published Event, Lost Rocks, 2017), p. 72.

where borders are difficult to trace, to grasp, to seen :

These words come from Giuditta Vendrame who speaks to the 'fluid, circular, universal and unifying element' of water as she collects 50 litres of international waters from the high seas, defined by the United Nation Convention on the Law of the Sea as a part of the sea where no state can claim sovereignty.

From Giuditta Vendrame, 'What Is the Purpose of Your Visit? A Journey towards the High Seas', *Migrant Journal*, 1: Across Country (September 2016), pp. 88–97 (p. 89).

confounds attempts at fixity :

Andrea Ballestero describes the nature of water, as she writes about aquifers: bodies of underground, permeable, water/rock. She writes:

Inherently multiplicitous and predisposed to vary, water confounds attempts at fixity. Water's defining traits are a tendency toward form-shifting, an obsession with gravity, and a material inclination to change […]. Thinking about the materiality of water entails querying, first of all, what its corporeality might be—how something becomes a water body in a particular time and place. It also requires tracing water beyond pipes and dams, and loosening the imagination to grasp its unfamiliar forms and visualize extended techno-scientific landscapes.

From Andrea Ballestero, 'Living with Aquifers', *e-flux* (26 July 2019) <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/liquid-utility/259651/living-with-aquifers/>.

I look out

now standing at the feet of lunar house

it's cold and windy

and I am trying to get the right angle
to see the top of the building

the building requires a tilt in the neck

I try to count the floors

but get lost on my way up

she meets me just in front of the rotating doors

and we enter

I show my passport and am given a red lanyard

escorted visitor

printed in bold

we go up in the lift

each floor the same

toilets to the right

office to the left

each with a corridor we couldn't go down

the offices are open plan

computers stacked on books so
necks are at the perfect angle

flexible desk sharing

4,200 people in this building

we read that it's just been refurbished under
the smarter working programme

we sit down in a small room

just big enough for the two of us

the wall a deep purple

strangely sketched with lines of past conversations

drawings and words rubbed off the
wall but never fully gone

we look out the window together

the plastic blinds

twisted between two panes of glass

the windows don't open she told me

we talk about the building

her thoughts

my thoughts

we leave our small cubicle and walk back to the lift

and up

all the way to the top

as we walk out along the corridor

a man in a high vis jacket

a tired smile

pushes a trolley of milk past us

unusually large bottles

green top

we turn the corner and enter the canteen

branded the sky kitchen

it’s a thursday so the menu

stuck up on the wall

is chicken curry, basmati rice and side

£4.50

vegetable pasta bake served with
garlic bread and side salad

£4.50

and

carrot cake

£1.20

please note that menu items are subject to change

I look past the menu and out to the view

over london

I can see canary wharf in one direction

the shard in another

houses trace lines through patches of green

a parking lot

its roof empty

apart from a few cars neatly tucked inside yellow boxes

we wonder at the piles of rubbish on the roof opposite

we look down

the view entrancing

seeing from above

I look up

returning to the waves again

my feet in the mud

my eyes blinking against the sun

the salty air

catches in my throat

I stand at the edge of this body

discarded barricades pile up in a hidden corner

no barbed wire here

no fence of steel

no camera

wiping the sea spit off its eye

just the sea

and the words

weaving a web with the water to
stop the other from passing

no barricade needed

the water and the words are enough

together we border

we decide who is we

distancing

we construct illegality

to protect our borders

we question your authenticity

words circling

defining

creating the image

of the other

language shaping

creating boundaries and barriers of its own

constructing the border

language is also a place of struggle[10]

enacting its own kind of violence[11]

the border seeping inwards

away from the sea

across the undulating land

into hospitals, schools, homes, banks,
businesses, universities

permeating

we practice/perform the border

the border

its lines confused

intricate

ambiguous[12]

lost in the clean pencil on paper

language is also a place of struggle :

These words come from bell hooks as she writes that 'we are wedded in language, have our being in words. Language is also a place of struggle.'

From bell hooks, 'Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness', *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, No. 36 (1989), pp. 15–23 (p. 16).

From Ally Bisshop, *Marble* (A Published Event, Lost Rocks, 2017), p. 72.

enacting its own kind of violence :

These words come from Judith Butler as she writes:

Oppressive language is not a substitute for the experience of violence. It enacts its own kind of violence.

From Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 9.

ambiguous :

This word travels from Ursula K. Le Guin as she writes of a border built between two worlds, Urras and its moon Anarres. She writes:

There was a wall. It did not look important. It was built of uncut rocks roughly mortared. An adult could look right over it, and even a child could climb it. Where it crossed the roadway, instead of having a gate it degenerated into mere geometry, a line, an idea of boundary. But the idea was real. It was important. For seven generations there had been nothing in the world more important than that wall. Like all walls it was ambiguous, two-faced. What was inside it and what was outside it depended upon which side of it you were on.

From Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* (New York: Avon Books, 1974), p. 1.

obscuring its complexity[13]

I return to the view from above

from the moon

the blue marble

the clean lines invisible

the mess of greens and browns and blues

the skin of the earth

seamless[14]

all flowing

the complexity exposed

I try to imagine what the sky

the moon

is seeing as it looks down at us

I / we gaze out to space

to find a way back to ourselves

to try and understand

to decode

lost in our own reflection

obscuring its complexity :

Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson write about the 'complex symbolic and material implications' of the border and how the 'modern cartographical representation and institutional arrangement of the border as a line—first in Europe and then globalized through the whirlwind of colonialism, imperialism, and anticolonial struggles—has somehow obscured this complexity and led us to consider the border as literally marginal.'

From Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, *Border as Method* (London: Duke University Press, 2013), p. vii.

the skin of the earth

seamless : These words return to Gloria Anzaldúa as she writes that 'the skin of the earth is seamless. / The sea cannot be fenced / *el mar* does not stop at borders.'

From Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* (San Francisco: Spinters / Aunt Lute Book Company, 1987), p. 3.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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Eloise is an interdisciplinary artist/researcher whose practice explores relationships between our language/s, bodies (human and non-human) and spaces. Having graduated from MA Situated Practice at the Bartlett School of Architecture, she is curious about how we understand our spaces, how they shape our interactions and the stories they hold. Her recent research and practice explore the relations between soil and border; the histories and futures of maps as practices of defining, categorising and conjuring; and how we engage with practices of queering and muddying the border. Eloise collaborates with others working at the intersections of art and architecture with a focus on the creative research of different spaces and ecosystems. She collaborates with artist/researcher Sara Yaoska Herrera Dixon, most recently through summer pools, an arts and spatial practice summer programme that brings people together to make and share knowledges and skills, responding to the particular landscape of the programme. Eloise is also part of subterranean, a collective with architect/artist Shivani Shah which explores the capacity of movement practice to grow empathy, draw connections and create relations between our bodies and the bodies of others (people, plants, waters). Among others, Eloise has shared work through performances, exhibitions and workshops at Model+ Festival, Barcelona; De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill on Sea; Chilean Conexion Festival, Berlin; OmVed Gardens, London; The Floating University, Berlin; School of Environment and Architecture, Mumbai; and Glogauair, Berlin.

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VALLÉE DE LA ROYA AND ITS OPAQUE INFRASTRUCTURES OF TRANSIT. INHABITING THE BORDER.

Stefano Mastromarino and Camillo Boano

ABSTRACT

This paper offers a closer look at the French-Italian border and its violence. The border in the Vallée de la Roya exemplifies a complex set of conditions of rurality, transit, and danger to which migrant bodies are constantly subjected. In this context, different genealogies of displacement, social fabrics and spatial forms are forced to coexist and resist situations of crisis in different ways, contributing to ongoing processes of dematerialisation of the border. The southern French-Italian border and its valley are the stage where new forms of spaces and practices of holding are enacted amid simultaneous and ambivalent conflicts between support and hostility, mobility and immobility, visibility, and invisibility. The growing increase of transit and the subsequent enclosure of the internal borders motivate simultaneous military mobilisations as well as important acts of reception and solidarity. The valley and the experience of Le Camping encompass a new fragment of an infrastructure of solidarity that explains its performativity as a transnational system of protection, by enabling transits through informal, diffuse, and opaque dispositifs of collective resistance.

NARRATIVES AND LIQUIDITY OF THE FRENCH-ITALIAN BORDER

The French-Italian border marks a linear territory of approximately 515 km, starting from Chamonix-Mont-Blanc in France and Courmayeur in Italy. It embraces two French regions – Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes and Provence-Alpes-Cote-d'Azur – and three on the Italian side – Valle d'Aosta, Piemonte and Liguria – and has its limits on the Mediterranean Sea, separating Menton and Ventimiglia. The current form of the border is the result of multiple changes that occurred over the past two centuries, such as the Treaty of Utrecht of 1713 or the Treaty of Turin in 1860. The 1947 Treaty of Paris ratified the definitive transfer of the municipalities of the Roya Valley to France, generally defining the outline of the border we know nowadays. These changes have reshaped the territory and contributed to ongoing social division between the two countries. Both the northern and southern side of the border have been defined by major population movements driven by labour, agricultural work, housing, or industry, particularly from the end of the nineteenth century; or wars and political conflicts from the twentieth century onwards, displacing Romanians, Kurds, Spaniards, and others.[1] As the most practical way to reach Northwest Europe from Italy, the area has remained a privileged route for people on the move wishing to reach France. As such, the French-Italian border is itself a border on the move, in its conflictual territorial configuration and ongoing scenography of displacement, an unstable and fluid territory often repressed by the French and Italian authorities. Along the border, various migratory hubs are visible and recognisable, often coinciding with the main infrastructures of mobility such as highways, main routes, and train stations. At the same time, the rural nature of this border allows the reproduction of more unseen migrant transits through mountain pathways and often dangerous trails along the coast. Overall, the main transit hubs since 2015 might be divided into three main territories: the valley of Nèvache and Briançonnais, Ventimiglia and Menton, and the Vallée de la Roya.

As an area strongly controlled by law enforcement, and yet an important transnational passage for refugees and people on the move, this territory raises epistemological questions about the ambivalent properties of the border. While borders pretend to maintain a certain objectivity through common international recognition, they remain entities that are always questioned by political agreement and susceptible to amendments and interpretation according to possibilities of crossing by goods and people.[2] Europe has a long history of border management as a geopolitical instrument of differentiality, from the borderlines of colonialised lands to the institution of the Schengen fortress and its gradual differential dissolution after 2015.[3] Sandro Mezzadra claims that the proliferation of borders constitutes 'the other side of globalization,' as produced by the crisis between the State and the territory, prismatically decomposed inside the territory and projected on the outside.[4] In the contemporary European geopolitical space, the border is not only materialised through its separation between countries, but also scattered in a series of patterns within and across cities and rural areas, namely in militarised hotspots, undefined passages, and transit hubs.[5] These expanded and mobile spaces of control make the borderland extremely diffuse, unpredictable, and opaque as they are constantly re-questioned and reconfigured through the perception of people in transit, law enforcement, and networks of solidarity. Displacements make this particularly visible, unfolding tensions and conflicts that shape the ongoing reconfiguration and its concurrent hardening and *dematerialisation* of borders and boundaries. By dematerialisation, we refer to the work of the collective Babels in defining the encounters between contemporary internal European frontiers

1 Anne-Marie Granet-Abisset, 'Une mémoire transfrontalière', *Hommes & migrations*, 1313 (2016), pp. 126-130 < https://doi.org/10.4000/hommesmigrations.3578 >.

2 Étienne Balibar, 'Qu'est-ce qu'une frontière?', in *Asile, Violence, Exclusion en Europe*, ed. by Marie-Claire Caloz-Tschopp, Axel Clevenot et Maria-Pia Tschopp (Genève : Université de Genève et Groupe de Genève, 1994), pp. 335-343.

3 Étienne Balibar, *Le crainte des masses. Politique et philosophie avant et après Marx*, (Paris: Galilée, 1997), pp. 382-387.

4 Sandro Mezzadra, 'Confini, migrazioni, cittadinanza'. *Scienza & Politica. Per Una Storia Delle Dottrine*, 16:30 (2004), pp. 83-92. < https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1825-9618/2839 >.

5 In the case of the French-Italian border, this is testified by the presence of law enforcement around migrants' spaces, such as train stations, camps, the centres of Ventimiglia and Menton or certain mountain pathways in the valley.

and displacement as progressively diluted and extended in a multitude of material and immaterial dispositifs[6] of control towards the undesirables.[7]

Diaspora and trajectories are unpredictable and composed through a multiplicity of factors and models that relocate traditional routes, global hotspots, solidarity opportunities and even migratory intentions. In this sense, classic 'migratory systems' – such as push and pull factors – no longer seem to respond to the comprehension of migratory dislocation, leaving space for complex and variegated dispositifs that allow passages while controlling; that protect while displacing; making inhabitation possible and impossible.[8] Controls are no longer confined to traditional spaces like customs and authorised crossing points. They have become more diffuse, relying increasingly on biometrics and administrative procedures that allow for the remote monitoring of illegalized individuals.[9] In this sense, borders like the French-Italian one are simultaneously thickened and multiplied – through the dispersed militarisation of the urban and rural territories that gravitate around them – and dematerialized through opaque dispositifs of control. These consequences explain the radical connection between displacement and borderisation, not only how such an opaque relationship influences transits, but also how the different forms and topologies shaped by this both material and virtual spatialisation of the border differentiate practices and spaces of displacement. The work of Nishat Awan is particularly interesting here, interrogating contemporary borders through practices and legacies that shape their limits.[10] Her term 'border topologies' looks at the border through a relational approach that includes human processes and ecological entities, including environments, as well as social systems reshaping the configuration and accessibility of the borderland.[11] Based on the concept of border topologies, borderscapes force us to reconsider the geopolitical contemporary space and its ongoing spatial reproduction based on the proliferation of conflicts, securitization, and the difficulty of movements and risk with which people in transit are confronted during their journeys.

The political border is connoted by this ambiguous property of being both open and closed simultaneously, as it is always questioned, and can be crossed regardless of controls and evictions. As a liquid that takes the shape of its container, these collisions embody the fluidity of the borderscape as a territory of repulsion and support, visibility and invisibility, solidity and porosity based on what and who makes the transit. Zygmunt Bauman's intuition for modern times and society appears adequate when looking at borders, which are 'unable to keep any shape and any course for long' and 'prone to change'.[12]

6 We refer to the term 'dispositif' with the meaning provided by Foucault and Agamben, as "literally anything that has the ability to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control and ensure the gestures, behaviors and opinions and speeches of living beings". Giorgio Agamben, *Che cos'è un dispositivo*? (Milano: Nottetempo, 2006), pp. 21-22.

7 Selek Pinar and Trucco Daniela (dir.), *Le Manège des frontières. Criminalisation des migrations et solidarités dans les Alpes-Maritimes*. (Paris: Le Passager clandestin, 2020); Michel Agier, *Gérer les indésirables. Des camps de réfugiés au gouvernement humanitaire*, (Paris: Flammarion, 2008).

8 Saskia Sassen, *Migranti, coloni, rifugiati. Dall'emigrazione di massa alla fortezza Europa*, (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1999), p. 95.

9 Selek Pinar and Trucco Daniela (dir.), *Le Manège des frontières. Criminalisation des migrations et solidarités dans les Alpes-Maritimes* (Paris: Le Passager clandestin, 2020)

10 Nishat Awan, 'Introduction to Border Topologies', *GeoHumanities*, 2:2 (2016), pp. 279-283 < https://doi.org/10.1080/2373566X.2016.1232172 >.

11 Awan, 'Introduction'.

12 Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 8.

This is testified by the encounters between the dispositifs of border control, transnational migration, collective hostility and 'hostipitality', to borrow a term from Jacques Derrida, as well as political agreements.[13] It represents the contradictory management made by the exchange of goods but restricted movement of 'illicit' bodies. It embodies the differential inclusivity between people of place and people out of place, people who have the right to cross and those who have to make so-called 'irregular transits'. At the same time, this liquidity includes the makeshift practices of people on the move in elaborating strategies of transit and finding new patterns of temporary inhabitation.

The French-Italian border makes visible the multifaceted, ideological, and imagined power of contemporary borders to reproduce new spaces of sovereignty. At the same time it allows reconsideration of the tactics used to assert people's autonomy in the face of state neglect, to inhabit and redefine their marginality, and to forge new identities and legitimacies across spaces of rejection and control.[14] In earlier works by Camillo Boano, to inhabit in displacement has been framed as a process of practices of care, repair, and imagination which forge a renewed politics of space. In this light, it can also be understood as 'a continuous creative process through which inhabitants withdraw from death in order to escort it, constituting an industrious community capable of building, maintaining and repairing its living space.'[15] Displacement can therefore be framed as a dual process of inhabitation, simultaneously as 'the impossibility of becoming home; of hosting futures; of dwelling relations and to inhabit political projects' and 'the preclusion of the material possibility of staying in a place,' as documented in recent work on extraction, destruction of camps, hypermobilisation of migrants, and the shaping of oppressive and racial border regimes.[16]

Thinking of border topologies introduces a nuance to debates around camps, which are often understood as contexts of emergency, relief, and securitisation, focusing on 'the spatial and legal strategies for channelling, containing, and selecting migration.'[17] The hardening yet opaque dematerialisation of the border into different patterns of border topologies might be seen as a process of shared exclusion and sovereignty, enabling new forms of unpredictable violence and rejection. However, in these topologies, displaced persons enact an infrastructure of solidarity which supports strategies to resist harassment and control. Looking at the border through the experience of ambivalent acts of hostility and solidarity allows for the unfolding of not only makeshift practices of support that enable this infrastructure of transit but also the ambiguous relations between space and identity that crash with the logic of displacement and policing at the French-Italian border and in the Vallée de la Roya.

Within such a contested territory of enquiry, this paper explores the inhabited and politicised nature of borders and the coexistence of marginalised bodies and spaces within contemporary European internal borders. Our investigation focuses on spaces where new and imperfect modes of inhabitation are constantly negotiated to safeguard the existence of fragile and communal lives. The main aim is to analyse the border as a platform for amplifying minor, autonomous voices in the fields of architecture and urban planning by examining the ever-changing categorisations of border infrastructures, continuously repositioned, reconsidered, and reactivated. Borders

13 Jacques Derrida, 'Hostipitality', *Angelaki* 5:3 (2000), pp. 3-18 < https://doi.org/10.1080/09697250020034706 >.

14 Matthew Longo, *The Politics of Borders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Harsha Walia, *Border and Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021); Martina Tazzioli, *The Making of Migration. The biopolitics of mobility at Europe's Borders* (London: Sage, 2020).

15 Camillo Boano and Giovanna Astolfo, 'Inhabitation as more-than-dwelling. Notes for a renewed grammar', *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 20:4 (2020), pp. 555-577 ≤ https://doi.org/10.1080/19491247.2020.1759486; Camillo Boano, 'Beyond violence. Toward the politics of inhabitation', lo *Squaderno*, 59 (2021), pp. 67-71 (p. 68) < http://www.losquaderno.net/?p=2174 >.

16 Camillo Boano, 'Toward the politics of inhabitation', *lo Squaderno,* 59 (2021), pp. 67-71 (p. 69) < http://www.losquaderno.net/?p=2174 >; Nicholas De Genova, Martina Tazzioli, Claudia Aradau et al, 'Minor keywords of political theory: Migration as a critical standpoint', *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 40:4 (2022), pp. 781–875 < https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654420988563 >.

right to space as a form of autonomous resistanc and legitimate expression. The Vallée de la Roya territory, due to its intense condition of rurality, grants opacity and assistance to people on the move. Here different situations of displacement and resistance, social tissues, and concurrent dynamics of holding found themselves coexisting and resisting multiple crises in multiple ways. Acknowledging its violence and opacity, we present the border as an occasion to enact weak and minor projects able to keep alive those areas in which plural lives are held with different degrees of protection and legitimacy in their spatial expression. The first part of the paper will describe the Roya, delving into the ambivalent proliferation of diffuse forms of holding at the border. Subsequently, the case of Le Camping will testify to the entrenched latencies of support that the valley has sedimented over time, dwelling on new architectures of care and non-differential hospitality. This analysis is the result of participatory observation in the valley during the months of April and May 2022, collecting data through interviews, volunteer collaborations, and affective experience. Finally, we will conclude by interrogating the border as an ambivalent geopolitical infrastructure of care and control, a generator of spaces and practices of differential hostility and support that hold bodies and migrant trajectories. It will look at how the existence of the border is negotiated by the strategies elaborated by people on the move and supporting actors to overcome dictated boundaries and form new spatial configurations of transit.

ROYA: *LA VALLÉE SOLIDAIRE*

The Vallée takes its name from the river Roya, which runs along the traces of the French-Italian border and culminates into the Mediterranean Sea, in Ventimiglia.[18] Despite beginning and ending in Italian territory, the valley is essentially made up of five French villages: Breil-sur-Roya, Saorge, Fontan, La Brigue and Tende. Surrounded by Italian soil, the site has a strong infrastructural dependence on the neighbouring country: to cross the villages or to exit the valley, the main road is via the D6024/SS20, beginning and ending in Italy between Limone and Ventimiglia. Public transports are also mixed: some villages are in fact accessible by train, either via the French line TER or via the Trenitalia line, which starts in Cuneo and culminates in Ventimiglia, via the Roya Valley. The bus itinerary necessarily implies crossing the border multiple times, linking Tende and Breil-sur-Roya to Menton, via Ventimiglia. The Ligurian border town of Ventimiglia probably remains the most important large urban centre of the valley. This junction between Alpes-Maritimes, Liguria, and Piedmont remains an area of daily mobility.

The complex spatial practices and conformations of the valley, as well as its social and material infrastructures, testify to the close dependence of the French on Italian soil, weakening the political and geographical border between the two countries.

17 Nicholas De Genova, Martina Tazzioli, Claudia Aradau et al, 'Minor keywords of political theory: Migration as a critical standpoint', *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 40:4 (2022), pp. 781–875 (p. 851) < https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654420988563 >.

18 Information in this paragraph is the result of our fieldwork and data taken from: Luca Giliberti, *Abitare la frontiera. Lotte neorurali e solidarietà ai migranti sul confine franco-italiano* (Verona: Ombre corte, 2020).

The rituals of inhabitants show the contradictions of the valley when considering past and present hostility and acts of resistance around crossings. The political environments of the border collide into practices of rejection and welcoming, peaking during the 2015 so-called 'migration crisis' and performed by those reclaiming their belonging to the territory and those who believed in a valley of solidarity.[19] Unquestionably, even though the Roya had never experienced a lack or decrease of controls at its frontiers, they intensified and multiplied after 2016. In the spring of 2015, the prefecture of the department announced that every train arriving from Ventimiglia had to be subjected to reinforced controls in the station of Menton-Garavan. Additional controls were then implemented along the highways and main roads linking the two countries, and the first months of 2016 marked the beginning of extraordinary control and militarisation of the Vallée de la Roya. 1,200 pushbacks were implemented at this border in 2015; 32,285 in 2016; 48,362 in 2017 and 23,695 in 2018.[20] According to data provided by associations and militant groups active in the territory, on average between thirty and sixty pushbacks took place per day during the year 2019 – with peaks of around a hundred.[21] With acts of hostility and militarisation scattered across the territory, studying the border means analysing its close relation to social and environmental topologies, an analysis which often reveals the unexpected places and configurations borders take, and suggesting the need to look at it from a planetary scale.[22] In figure 2 we have spatialised the militarisation in the valley (cross area), showing how different hubs of systematic law enforcement control reshape national borders. The permanent and non-permanent control on roads (blue and pink triangles) and at stations (blue and pink squares) create newly detached and diffuse spaces of differential transit that not only disperse the border in a vastly controlled borderland, but also generate patterns of danger and strategies of resistance and networks of support for people in transit.

19 We refer to the so-called Europe's 'migration crisis' of 2015-2016, in which people fleeing from wars, conflicts, political persecution and hostile environments sought refuge in Europe. This situation has been questionably defined as one of crisis, although it is by no means new and exceptional.

20 The term pushback refers to a range of actions taken by states with the goal of expelling people on the move from their territory and impeding their access to relevant legal frameworks of assistance and refuge. We draw on the works of Tazzioli and De Genova in: Nicholas De Genova, Martina Tazzioli, Claudia Aradau et al, 'Minor keywords of political theory: Migration as a critical standpoint', *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*, 40:4 (2022), pp. 781–875 < https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654420988563>, as well as local reports at the French-Italian border and EU reports, such as: Hope Barker, Milena Zajović, *The Black Book of Pushbacks*, (Brussels: The Left, 2022), < https://left.eu/issues/publications/black-book-of-pushbacks-2022/ > [accessed 20th December 2022].

21 Anaïs Lambert, Loïc Le Dall, Laure Palun, Emilie Pesselier, *Persona Non Grata. Conséquences des politiques sécuritaires et migratoires à la frontière franco-italienne, Rapport d'observation 2017-2018.* (Paris: Anafé, 2019); Selek Pinar and Trucco Daniela (dir.), *Le Manège des frontières. Criminalisation des migrations et solidarités dans les Alpes-Maritimes*. (Paris: Le Passager clandestin, 2020).

22 Awan, 'Introduction'.

It is in these new forms of scattered borderisation that people in transit assemble infrastructures of solidarity and strategies to resist harassment and control of police and state powers. The Vallée de la Roya stands out particularly in this context, with a great number of citizens engaging in some form of solidarity, such as hosting people privately or contributing to food distributions and outreach. The progressive mediatisation of practices of reception and the acquisition of certain notoriety around specific spaces of support increases the new connotation of the valley not only as a migratory hub but firstly as a *vallée solidaire*.[23]

The solidarity in the valley is a latency of a general territorial sensibility that has continuously manifested its presence on different occasions: it is part of the larger series of mobilisations around the extractive practices in the Vallée des Merveilles, the gatherings for the revendication of essential public facilities and services in the villages, or the construction of the Tunnel de Tende.[24] More specifically, it echoes the radical past of the neo-rural immigration that settled in the territory in the 1970s and which drastically influenced the historic connotation of the valley as one of resistance and activism.[25] In addition, resistance in the valley responds to the entrenched local commitment of inhabitants in the rural environment. Compared to cities, meeting people, exchanging information, and coordinating local actions are eased in the villages of Roya. Knowledge and awareness of collective help, crucial in a valley where facilities and necessities are not always available, facilitate the emergence of acts of resistance and porous and informal networks of solidarity. In a rural context, different and multiple battles converge and create new spaces of maintenance and fertile ground to recognize that forced migration, extractive practices, and marginalisation are linked to spatial dynamics of dispossession and displacement that are far from unique, new, or over.[26] Thinking of the valley of resistance reframes the often labelled 'refugee/migration crisis' as the effect of ongoing 'multicrisis': housing, food, climate, refugee crisis which find spatialization in what many have described as a 'crisis of reception'.[27]

23 Luca Giliberti, *Transits. La Vallée solidaire*, online video recording, YouTube, 4th October 2018 < https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dwJ4b40CRA> [accessed 15th May 2021].

24 In 1979, the General Company for Nuclear Materials (COGEMA) commenced research in the Vallée des Merveilles for the extraction of uranium. In this occasion, five thousand French and Italian inhabitants gathered to protest against the plan in what has been named the "Hiking for life" - *randonnée de la vie*. See: Guy Porte, 'Cinq mille marcheurs français et italiens manifestent contre les mines d'uranium dans le Mercantour', *Le Monde*, 26th June 1979, < https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/1979/06/26/cinq-mille-marcheurs-francais-et-italiens-manifestent-contre-les-mines-d-uranium-dans-le-mercantour_2775591_1819218.html >; Catherine Lioult, Mobilisation des opposants au doublement du tunnel de Tende, *Franceinfo*, 15th March 2015 < https://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/provence-alpes-cote-d-azur/alpes-maritimes/mobilisation-des-opposants-au-doublement-du-tunnel-de-tende-675593.html >.

25 The valley experienced an unusual arrival of people – soon labelled "néoruraux," neorurals – coming mostly from middle-class backgrounds and large cities. Most of them are associated to 1960s and '70s alternative political movements, from squatting, to radical left-wing or anarchist ideologies. See: Luca Giliberti, *Abitare la frontiera. Lotte neorurali e solidarietà ai migranti sul confine franco-italiano* (Verona: Ombre corte, 2020).

26 Vicki Squire, *Europe's migration crisis. Border deaths and human dignity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2020).

27 Heaven Crawley and Dimitris Skleparis, 'Refugees, migrants, neither, both: categorical fetishism and the politics of bounding in Europe's "migration crisis"', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 44(1), pp. 48–64. (2018) https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1348224; Annalisa Lendaro, Claire Rodier, Youri Lou Vertongen, *La crise de l'accueil. Frontières, droits, résistances* (Paris: La Découverte, 2019).

Figure 1 Vallée de la Roya. View over Tende.

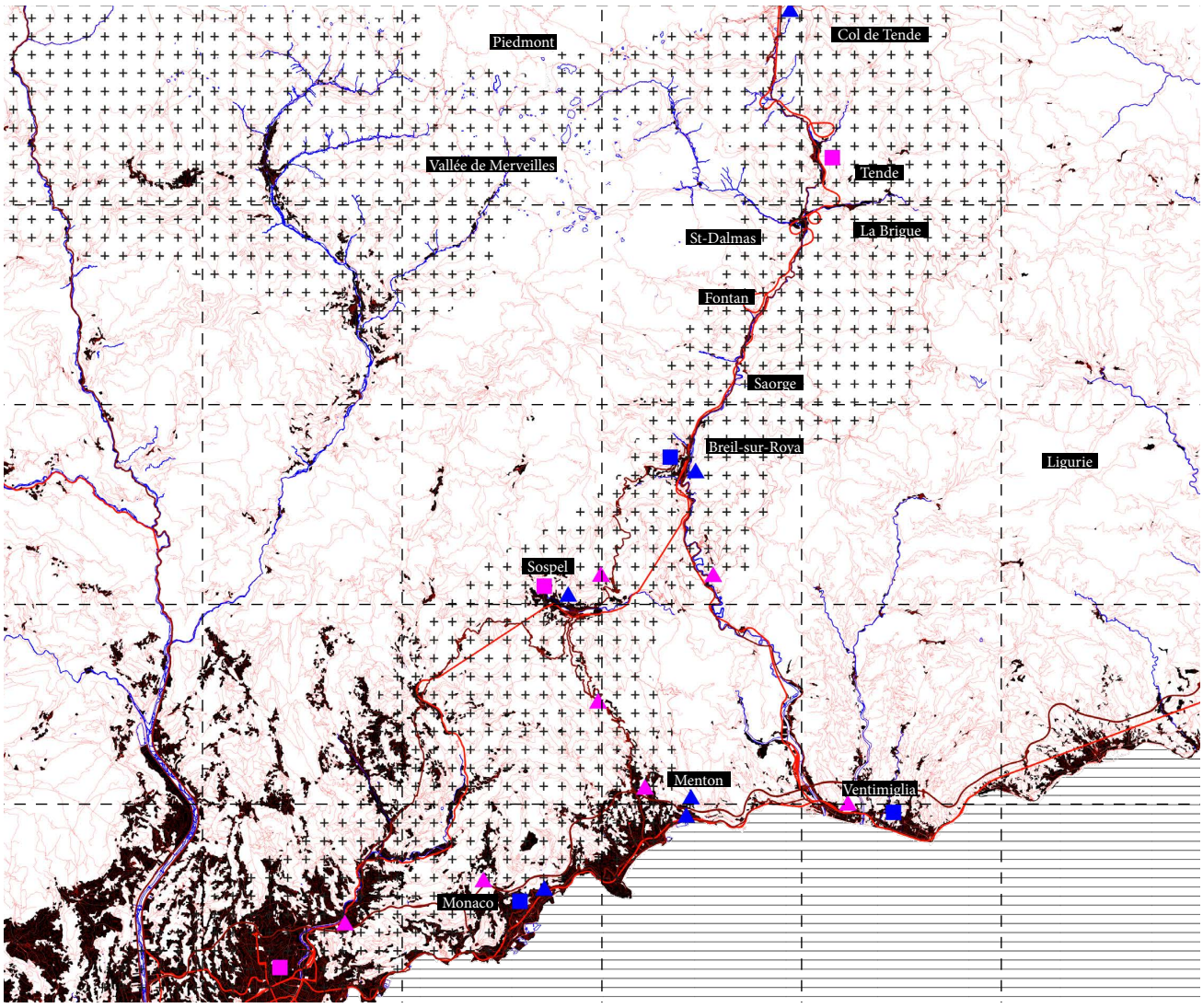

Figure 2 Militarisation at the French-Italian border.

From the experiences of the solidarity of the Vallée de la Roya not only do different images of reception emerge, but also new aspects of confronting the territory and its transnational dimension. Compared to humanitarian practices in urban environments, in the valley new categories and dichotomies emerge, namely those related to the rural, the border, and the opaque. With opacity, we refer again to an ambivalent category of differential interpretations. Opacity suggests that borders embody 'the grey area of migration governmentality' as a scenography of violence, refoulement and exception that 'remains under the threshold of political visibility'; as a spatialisation of blurred biopolitical technologies entangled with racialisation and capitalisation that 'inevitably generates disorientation for the migrants, making it hard to grasp how the EU border regime works.'[28] At the same time, the space of opacity is what allows migrant bodies to transit, inhabit and *wander*, enabling the generation of an archipelago of coexistences and practices of support as a form of resistance against domination.[29]

As depicted in figure 3, the main spaces of support tend to concentrate on the coast, where the majority of people in transit stay for days or weeks until they are able to cross the border. However, throughout the years, various new spaces of support have developed in the villages, especially when the valley began to be actively populated as a point of passage for people in transit

Valley dwellers put into action an infrastructure of solidarity made up of different hotspots, such as the centre of Roya Citoyenne, or the private houses spread through the valley with hundreds of people willing to help.[30] The entire village of Saorge – 455 inhabitants in 2015 – welcomes nearly 60 people in private houses, and other villages support food distribution and general outreach throughout the territory and on the coast. The territory of activity of this infrastructure again has very fluid and opaque borders, with the network of support travelling and operating across the main hubs of emergency: on the coast, helping associations in Ventimiglia; on the border, monitoring pushbacks; in cities, such as Nice and Ventimiglia, organising demonstrations to defend people's freedom of movement and demand institutional support. The infrastructure in the valley performs as a significant transnational dispositif of connection and support, enabling transit through an informal network of diffuse houses and people willing to help. In a process that might be paralleled to the Underground Railroad of the nineteenth century in the United States, this resistance represents a relationship and attachment to the borderland that is not limited to local resistance but claims a degree of universality.[31]

The years 2019-2020 marked a substantial shift in patterns of transit and acts of solidarity. The increase in law enforcement, as well as the effects of the Covid-19 crisis, greatly contributed to reducing the number of people migrating across the valley. However, this situation pre-empted a new state of crisis in October 2020 as a result of Storm Alex. The storm led to exceptional rainfall in the Alpes-Maritimes during the night of 2nd October, which devastated several lands and valleys of the borderland. Considerable human and material damages occurred, with many casualties and missing people. The valley saw multiple crises converging and intersecting: on the one hand, the so-called 'migration crisis', on the other, the disasters of the storm. The capillary associative network that had assisted people in transit in the valley was at the centre of the management of a new crisis which entrenched a vigorous inter-municipal solidarity. The constant reactivation of practices that the valley has experienced through time, taking different forms and responding to different needs, reveals an additional gaze to look at the dynamics of resistance that they have generated.

28 Martina Tazzioli, '"Choking without killing": Opacity and the grey area of migration governmentality', *Political Geography*, 89 (2021) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2021.102412>; Claudia Aradau and Martina Tazzioli, 'Biopolitics multiple: Migration, extraction, subtraction', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 48 (2) (2020), pp. 198–220 (p. 208-209; p.203) < https://doi.org/10.1177/0305829819889139>/

29 Édouard Glissant, *Poétique de la relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).

30 Gala Nettelbladt and Camillo Boano, 'Infrastructures of Reception: The Spatial Politics of Refuge in Mannheim, Germany', *Science Direct*, 71 (2019), pp. 78-90 < https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2019.02.007 >.

31 The network of safe passages and houses established and supported by abolitionists, used by enslaved African Americans to escape into free states during the early to mid nineteenth century. See: Eric Foner, *Gateway to Freedom* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015).

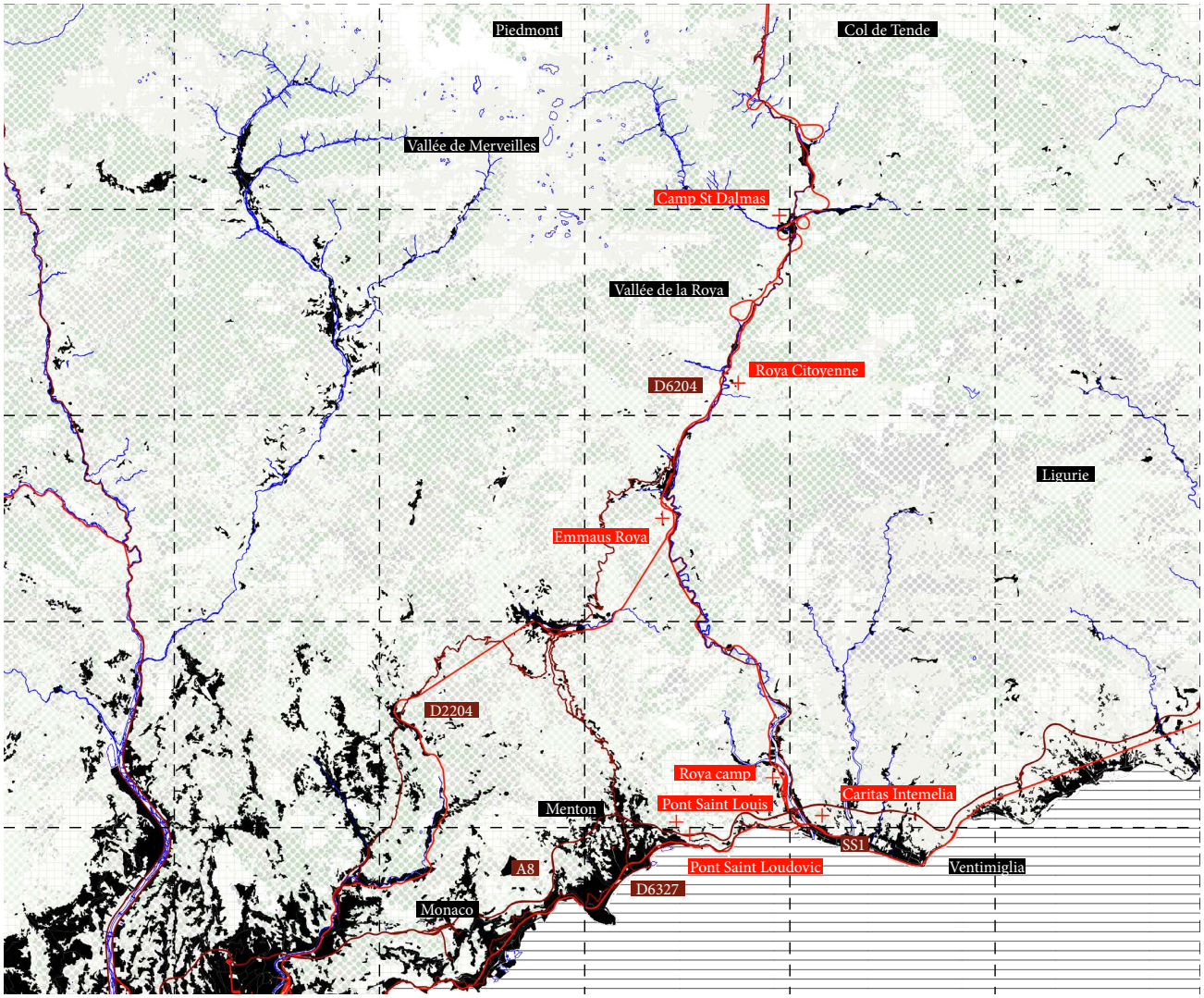

Figure 3 Main migrants routes (in dark red) and former and current places of support to people in transit at the French-Italian border.

LE CAMPING

The following narrative emerges from fieldwork carried out in the months of April and May 2022 at the French-Italian border. In this period, observations were made by talking with citizens throughout the villages and Ventimiglia, and participating in the local network of support in food distributions, outreach, and general assistance. These have been essential to understanding the stories, acts of resistance, and perceptions of the borderland of people on the move and people supporting them, discussing their routes, fears, and hopes. Immersion in the everyday life of Roya, although for a very limited period, allowed us to experience past and present spaces of displacement at the border and the infrastructure of solidarity that progressively morphs around them.

An important example of hospitality in the valley is the farm of Cedric Herrou, an organic farmer from Breil-sur-Roya. Preoccupied with the situation in Ventimiglia and the increase of people transiting through the valley, Cedric started collaborating with the association Roya Citoyenne, involved in aiding people crossing on the coast. Like many others in the villages, the farmer soon decided to host people at his place, equipping the fields with tents and roulettes. In order to provide decent shelter and essential facilities to anyone, various wooden constructions have been co-built by the farmer and volunteers, such as dry toilets, showers, and a communal area.

Soon the site started to represent a point of reference for those wishing to help people in transit in the valley. The site, labelled 'Le Camping' or 'Le Camp', was completely self-sufficient and managed by the farmer, volunteers living in the valley, or those coming from the neighbouring territories, as well as the people welcomed who actively took part in the self-management of the shelter. Various associations started to assist in place, providing legal aid, French language courses, artistic ateliers, and medical aid to the vulnerable people, managed by Médecins du Monde. Around 2,500 persons have been hosted on the farm since 2015, with peaks of arrivals in the summer of 2017. The farm was also one of the most emblematic case of the intense militarisation and control by law enforcement in the valley: the strong mediatisation of the figure of Cedric Herrou and the importance that his farm acquired in the valley as the main space of reception led to remarkable police pressure in close proximity of the site, with up to five police checkpoints surveilling 24/7 at one point. The constant militarisation of the farm has highly contributed to the general decrease of people transiting in the valley, significantly reducing numbers in the shelter.

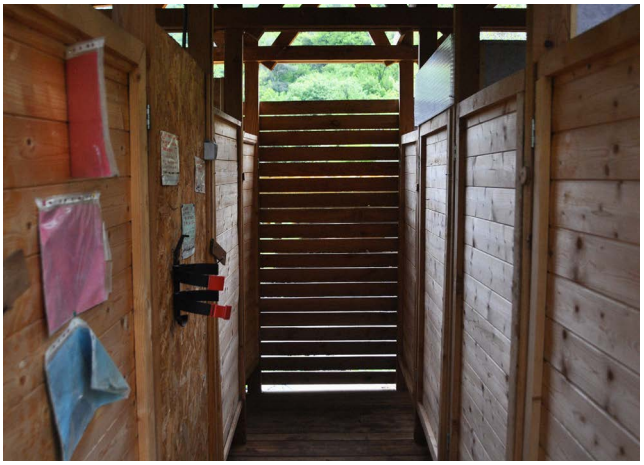

Figure 4 Dry toilets and showers installed on the farm

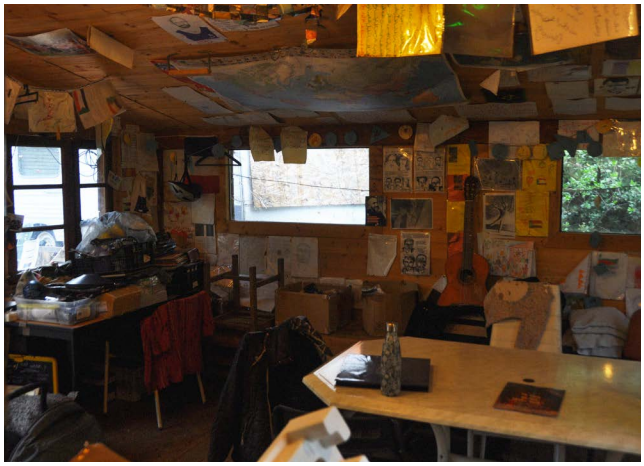

Figure 5 The common area, full of decoration, drawings and memories left by former inhabitants and volunteers in the Camping

Figure 6 A common area in La Tuilerie with a large kitchen, sofas, toys, etc.

Figure 7 Volunteer workshop for the reconstruction of a burned henhouse

In 2019, when transit had consistently diminished, the farm developed a new project, Emmaus Roya, conceived to assist people who wished to settle in the valley and regulate the very informal experience of the former years.[32] The urge for a shift originated from questioning how to move from an emergency reception to a persistent housing facility. In 2019, activists and volunteers on the farm found in Emmaus France the possibility to establish a *communauté agricole* – an agricultural community – that allowed people to inhabit the farm while participating in agricultural activity. The association Emmaus Roya was created by some former militants of Roya Citoyenne, notably including Cedric Herrou. Still now, following the acquisition of a vacant building in Breil-sur-Roya, named *Le Tuilerie*, the association welcomes people in different situations of precarity (fig 6). They are given a house with all facilities and food, and receive social and administrative assistance. People sheltered in Le Tuilerie participate in a social reinsertion program through agriculture, contributing to self-production and management of the community that hosts them.

The association also organises volunteer self-construction workshops to transform the spaces of Le Tuilerie and the farm, attracting a large number of people from Nice, Menton, and all over France to help the community. The workshops involve cooperative design development through local and durable materials. The construction of fences around La Tuilerie, the arrangement and design of the rooms, as well as the reconstruction of a burned henhouse on the farm, follow this commitment (fig 7). Furthermore, when the crisis of Storm Alex began in late 2020, the network of volunteers and activists in the farm played a remarkable role in the reconstruction of the valley, building dykes and supporting vulnerable inhabitants in the most affected villages. The association is still engaged in supporting unsheltered people but, as transits have drastically diminished in the Valley, they mainly operate in Ventimiglia and on the coast, providing weekly food distribution, border monitoring and outreach in collaboration with other local associations such as Kesha Niya, Roya Citoyenne, or Caritas Intemelia.

32 Information here is taken from an interview with volunteers and founders of Emmaus Roya, as well as participation with the network of support during the months of April and May 2022.

DWELLING IN THE OPACITY

The investigation at the French-Italian border makes visible the complex interplay between practices of control and care.[33] Building on the concept of opacity and dematerialisation on European borders, we aim to explain what has been previously referred to as an architectural embodiment of some form of holding.[34] Here the term 'holding' refers simultaneously to the act of taking and keeping something in your hand or arms and supporting something, to keep someone in a place so that they cannot leave. As explained by Christina Sharpe, although the term might be associated with 'care', it also represents a 'door of no return,' as a 'way to tend to the living and the dying.'[35] In the specific case in analysis – a border continuously re-questioned by opaque methods of displacement, control and assistance – practices of rejection and reception give rise to inevitable and ambivalent infrastructures of holding manifested in different ways. The assistance at *Le Camping*, the militarisation in the valley and Ventimiglia, as well as the silent solidarity in the villages over the years, are some of the patterns through which this holding is manifested across the border. They represent the institutional manifestation of 'hostipitality' on the edge, as well as the architectural capturing of less-than-human beings, creating spaces where containment, dispossession, and prolonged displacement coexist with the emergence of collective resistance and solidarity.[36] Drawing on the works of Sharpe, Simone and Boano and Bianchetti, we claim that inhabiting the border through such opaque infrastructures of transit is a form of holding that captures the ambivalent gesture operated by concurrent acts of care and control.[37]

Law enforcement acts differently here, through constant mobile surveillance that shapes the borderland as camp-like.[38] The reintroduction of the internal frontiers in 2015 completely transformed the dynamic of transiting at the border. People who arrive in Ventimiglia are coming from the Central Mediterranean or the Balkan route and for most of them, the primary intention is to settle in either France or the United Kingdom.[39] In fact, the controls and pushback at the border oblige them to temporarily settle in the makeshift camps of the city, with difficult conditions of shelter and coexistence with locals. Harassment, pushbacks, and systematic control as acts of repression in the vast borderland penetrate through a system of movable hubs, able to delocalise spaces and times of migration. Looking at the controls and differential management at the border only highlights one aspect of the crossing rituals of people in transit, as it omits their role in conceiving new ways to overcome this violence, often supported by volunteers and activists. Practices of solidarity here act as infrastructure through a network of houses, people, and actions that constantly dismantle the political division of the border and silently enable prohibited transnational passages through Europe. In this way, *Le Camping*, like many other informal shelters, acquires a crucial transnational dimension, activated by porous and interconnected solidarity. The ambivalent infrastructure of holding generated by these two interwoven practices takes back the strict conflictual bond between vulnerability and resistance and gives power to the progressive dematerialisation of the border. Collective resistances remain sedimented practices in the territory and are able to strengthen a mutual relationship with it, as well as to unfold knowledge of the site and therefore reproduce tactics to tackle diverse conflicts and situations of crisis. The commitment during the storm, which followed the solidarity towards people in transit, is one example of this capacity.

33 See: Michel Agier and Stefan Le Courant, *Babels. Enquêtes sur la condition migrante* (Paris : Seuils, 2022).

34 Stefano Mastromarino, 'Inhabiting spaces of holding. Practices of reception and rejection in Greater Paris and at the French-Italian border' (Unpublished MSc thesis, Politecnico di Torino, 2022) in *Webthesis Polito* < https://webthesis.biblio.polito.it/23923/ >, Stefano Mastromarino and Camillo Boano, 'Makeshift borders in Porte de la Chapelle. Strategies of imperfect weak inhabitation across Paris' Boulevard Périphérique', *UOU Scientific Journal*, no. 05, (2023), pp. 124-137 < https://doi.org/10.14198/UOU.2023.5.11 >.

35 Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), p. 139

36 Sharpe, *In the Wake*.

37 AbdouMaliq Simone, 'The Uninhabitable', *Cultural Politics* 12 (2), (2016) pp. 135-54 <https://doi.org/10.1215/17432197-3592052>; Camillo Boano and Cristina Bianchetti (eds.), *Politics, Ethics, and the Affective Economy of Inhabiting* (Berlin: JOVIS Verlag GmbH, 2022).

38 From an interview with a citizen of the valley made in May 2022: 'We thought that this situation was going to finish. Now migrants are no longer present in the valley, but law enforcement is still here, and it feels like they will never leave […]. I don't know if they're here to control or simply to discourage arrivals, I know that the constant feeling I have as a citizen is living in a militarized camp.'

When studying territories of transit, it is crucial to look at borders to fully comprehend people's states of impermanence and violence, and the ambivalence between resistance and exclusion. This method reveals that although these spaces and practices are similar to what happens in urban displacement (especially regarding their holding dimension) this response is to a radically different environment confronted with peculiar logics of holding, opacity, and refuge. In the first place, dimensions and density play a remarkable role in shaping the phenomena, by simultaneously allowing shelter yet increasing distances and expanding times of support and eviction. The peculiar rural nature of the French-Italian border, as well as the heterogeneity of its alpine topography, intensify the spatial violence of the border and the fatigue of the route. It is also important to acknowledge that border violence emerges from the tension between the need to find and sustain refuge and the impossibility of accessing it. An alternative involves opening a temporality between the permanence of the constructed border and the impermanence of the political condition of refuge and its absence in order to create a different political mode of dwelling 'not with the camp as a paradigm or exemplum per se, but as a material force of an enduring colonial history.'[40] The territory here is 'a tenacious struggle to resist the violent subtractions of future, of space, of possibilities, creating space and forms of life. Such struggle, in the complete anonymity and opacity, it is continually inventing an inhabiting life and practice an exceedance of inhabitability and the politics of inhabitation.'[41]

In this context, the border space is the epistemic element, 'heuristic space', generator of the multiple and subjective gazes through which the territory can be perceived. It becomes 'interactive architecture' that porously 'constructs and deconstructs itself depending on the relationship that each individual has with the state; a regulating device that mediates between birth and nationhood'.[42] Despite the geographical and historical background, the border here embodies recurrent forces of resistance to mechanisms of exploitation and dispossession. It generates a series of spaces on the edge where 'living is not (only) a question of survival but a process of continuous adaptation between protection and freedom, between care and control.'[43] It is precisely through this controversial reflection that the border space is the backbone of practices of differential inclusion that enable dynamics of holding of *indésiderables*.[44]

We might assume that the case of the French-Italian borderland evokes archival practices of spaces and dynamics of holding that complete the fragments lacking other situations of displacement in France, as it is confronted with peculiar logics of opacification, differentiation, and resistance. At the same time, they present weak strategies of refuge rather than solutions, by making it concurrently possible and opaque, as hidden and protected. These places show the ability of displaced persons and associations to build spaces of maintenance, opacifying the threshold between legality and illegality or potential accessibility. They represent the effort to overcome a dictated life and produce new platforms of imperfect inhabitation that enable transit and different patterns of coexistence. They provide conceptual paradigms to understand the spatial narratives shaped by displacement and sustain – through opacity – minor and weak architectures of transit.

39 Livio Amigoni, Silvia Aru, Ivra Bonnin, Gabriele Proglio, Cecilia Vergnano, *Debordering Europe: Migration and Control Across the Ventimiglia Region – Migration, Diasporas and Citizenship*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

40 Nasser Abourahme, 'The Camp', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 40:1 (2020), pp. 35-42 (p. 38).

41 Camillo Boano, 'Urbanism of exception: Camps and inhabitation', *Revista Jatobá*, 3 (2021) < https://doi.org/10.54686/revjat.v3i.68984 >.

42 Saskia Sassen, *Una sociologia della globalizzazione* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007); Sandi Hilal and Alessandro Petti, *Permanent Temporariness* (Stockholm: Art and Theory Publishing, 2019), p. 78.

43 Camillo Boano and Cristina Bianchetti, *Lifelines: Politics, ethics, and the affective economy of inhabiting* (Berlin: Jovis Verlag GmbH, 2022), p. 10.

44 Michel Agier, *Gérer les indésiderables. Des camps de réfugiés au gouvernement humanitaire* (Paris: Flammarion, 2008).

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ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Tom Keeley

ABSTRACT

Alternative Arrangements is a series of works that have emerged from my doctoral research at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. This practice-based research asks how architectures and landscapes of the contested border on the island of Éire (Ireland) tell the stories of its pasts and presents. It uses 'topographic practice' – a term I have been developing through the course of my PhD building on Jane Rendell's ideas of 'critical spatial practice' – to unpack architectural and landscape historiography as a form of artistic output; seeing the methods, practices and outputs as sites themselves, sites that build a multi-layered topography – a landscape of practice – to respond to the specific characteristics of each place.[1] Here I do so through 'bordering practices' that aim to break down the binary of the border.[2]

This third and final project of the PhD consists of film, photography, site-specific installation, and texts to be read in association with key locations, histories, and materials of the border, which in the process of 'alternative arrangement' have become intentionally 'polysituated.'[3] In each site these installations act as allegories to create uncanny double-takes that seek to reconfigure the power dynamics of the centre by engaging with architectures, landscapes, and histories of the periphery. My PhD research began with the border in sight – both conceptually as an object of study and practically in the relentless early years of the Brexit process – but ends here with the border perhaps disappearing entirely, or at least creating the imaginative space for it to do so.

1 Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), p. 6.

2 Mohamad Hafeda, *Negotiating Conflict in Lebanon: Bordering Practices in a Divided Beirut* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), p. 21.

3 John Kinsella, *Polysituatedness: A Poetics of Displacement*, Angelaki Humanities (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), p. 18

ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENT #1: AIRD MHIC GIOLLAGÁIN, CO. DHOIRE *(Magilligan Point, Co. Derry)*

Aird Mhic Giollagáin marks the northern end of the border where the still contested waters of Loch Feabhail (*Lough Foyle*) meet the Atlantic. It was here in the nineteenth century that the colonial mapping of Ireland was begun by the British Ordnance Survey, in doing so violently translating the landscape from the original Irish to English.

BRIAN FRIEL

Translations, 1981

ACT ONE An afternoon in late August 1833.

The hedge-school is held in a disused bar or hay-shed or byre. Along the back wall are the remains of five or six stalls – wooden posts and chains where cows were once milked and bedded. A double door left, large enough to allow a cart to enter. A window right. A wooden stairway without a banister leads to the upstairs living-quarters (off) of the schoolmaster and his son. Around the room are broken and forgotten implements: a cart-wheel, some lobster-pots, farming tools, a battle of hay, a churn, etc. There are also the stools and bench seats which the pupils use and a table and chair for the master. At the door a pail of water and a soiled towel. The room is comfortless and dusty and functional – there is no trace of a woman's hand.

Captain Lancey is middle-aged; a small crisp officer, expert in his field as a cartographer but uneasy with people – especially civilians, especially these foreign civilians. His skill is with deeds not words.

Jimmy Jack Cassie – known as the Infant Prodigy – sits by himself, contentedly reading Homer in Greek and smiling to himself. He is a bachelor in his sixties, lives alone, and comes to these evening classes partly for the intellectual stimulation. He is fluent in Latin and Greek but is in no way pedantic – to him it is perfectly normal to speak in these tongues. He never washes. His clothes – heavy top coat, hat, mittens, which he wears now – are filthy and he lives in them in summer and winter, day and night. He now reads in a quiet voice and smiles in profound satisfaction. For Jimmy the world of the gods and the ancient myths is as real and as immediate as everyday life in the townland of Baile Beag.

Hugh is a large man, with residual dignity, shabbily dressed, carrying a stick. He has, as always, a large quantity of drink taken, but he is by no means drunk. He is in his early sixties.

Owen is the younger son, a handsome, attractive young man in his twenties. He is dressed smartly – a city man. His manner is easy and charming: everything he does is invested with consideration and enthusiasm. He now stands framed in the doorway, a travelling bag across his shoulder.

LANCEY: I see. (*He clears his throat. He speaks as if he were addressing children – a shade too loudly and enunciating excessively.*) You may have seen me – seen me – working in this section – section? Working. We are here – here – in this place – you understand? – to make a map – a map – a map and –

JIMMY: *Nonne Latine loquitur?*
[Doesn't he speak Latin?]

Hugh holds up a restraining hand.

HUGH: James.

LANCEY *(to Jimmy):* I do not speak Gaelic, sir. (He looks at Owen.)

OWEN: Carry on.

LANCEY: A map is a representation on paper – a picture – you understand picture? – a paper picture – showing, representing this country – yes? – showing your country in miniature – a scaled drawing on paper of – of – of –

Suddenly Doalty sniggers. Then Bridget. Then Sarah. Owen leaps in quickly.

OWEN: It might be better if you assume they understand you –

LANCEY: Yes?

OWEN : And I'll translate you as you go along.

LANCEY: I see. Yes. Very well. Perhaps you're right. Well. What we are doing is this.

He looks at Owen. Owen nods reassuringly.

His Majesty's government has ordered the first ever comprehensive survey of this entire country – a general triangulation which will embrace detailed hydrographic and topographic information and which will be executed to a scale of six inches to the English mile.

HUGH (*pouring a drink):* Excellent – excellent.

Lancey looks at Owen.

OWEN: A new map is being made of the whole country.

Lancey looks to Owen: Is that all? Owen smiles reassuringly and indicates to proceed.

LANCEY: This enourmous task has been embarked on so that the military authorities will be equipped with up-to-date and accurate information on every corner of this part of the Empire.

OWEN: The job is being done by soldiers because they are skilled in this work.

LANCEY: And also so that the entire basis of land valuation can be reassessed for purposes of more equitable taxation.

OWEN: This new map will take the place of the estate-agents' map so that from now on you will know exactly what is yours in law.

LANCEY: In conclusion I wish to quote two brief extracts from the white paper which is our governing charter: *(Reads.)* 'All former surveys of Ireland originated in forfeiture and violent transfer of property; the present survey has for its object the relief which can be afforded to the proprietors and occupiers of land from unequal taxation.'

OWEN: The captain hopes that the public will cooperate with the sappers and that the new map will mean that taxes are reduced.

HUGH: A worthy enterprise – *opus honestum*! [honest work!] And Extract B?

LANCEY: 'Ireland is privileged. No such survey is being undertaken in England. So this survey cannot but be received as proof of the disposition of this government to advance the interests of Ireland.' My sentiments too.

OWEN: This survey demonstrates the government's interest in Ireland and the captain thanks you for listening so attentively to him.

HUGH: Our pleasure, Captain.

ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENT #2: INIS BADHBHA, LOCH ÉIRNE, CO. FHEAR MANACH *(Boa Island, Lough Erne, Co. Fermanagh)*

Inis Badhbha is an island in Loch Éirne, Co. Fhear Manach, which is home to Caldragh Cemetery and the two-sided – or bordered – Boa Island Janus figure: a carved representation of a Celtic deity. The island is also significant as following Partition the British Army turned the island into a landbridge by building a series of causeways. This connected a geographically isolated part of the county that had effectively become an enclave – unable to be accessed without entering the then Irish Free State or a long detour around the lough – to the larger eastern part.

SEAMUS HEANEY

January God, 1972

Then I found a two faced stone
On burial ground,
God-eyed, sex-mouthed, it's brain
A watery wound.
In the wet gap of the year,
Daubed with fresh lake mud,
I faltered near his power —-
January God.
Who broke the water, the hymen
With his great antlers —-
There reigned upon each ghost tine
His familiars,
The mothering earth, the stones
Taken by each wave,
The fleshy aftergrass, the bones
Subsoil in each grave.

ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENT #3: THE RAINBOW BALLROOM, GLEANN FEARNA, CO. LIATROIM

(Glenfarne, Co. Leitrim)

The Rainbow Ballroom – 'the ballroom of romance' – lies in Gleann Fearna, Co. Liatroim on the main road from Inis Ceithleann (*Enniskillen*) to Sligeach (*Sligo*). From the 1950s onwards country ballrooms such as this would have hosted touring bands playing a mixture of country and western music and traditional Irish folk. This went into decline following the Miami Showband killings in 1975 where the loyalist paramilitary Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) killed three members of one of Ireland's most popular touring bands.

The methodology for this work (and for the wider PhD) takes the position that there can be no singular history of the border written as it is so contested. Instead it seeks to make 'alternative arrangements' as a way of creating a pluralist, shifting portrait of this place. During the Brexit process the Brady Amendment of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 called for 'alternative arrangements' to the so-called 'Irish backstop.'[4] This work shifts the emphasis: from 'alternative arrangements' for goods and services to making 'alternative arrangements' of contested historical, material, and spatial fragments and their operations as 'sites' and 'non-sites.'[5]

4 House of Commons, 'House of Commons Debate (29 January 2019). Vol. 653 Col. 783.' (Hansard, 2019) <https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/publications-records/house-of-commons-publications/bv_commons_vol_653.pdf> [accessed 22 February 2023].

5 Robert Smithson and Jack D. Flam, *Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 364.

ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENT #4: CLAÍ NA MUICE DUIBHE NEAR CLUAIN EOIS, CO. MHUINEACHÁIN

(Black Pig's Dyke, near Clones, Co. Monaghan)

Claí na Muice Duibhe forms an non-continuous linear earthwork along the rough borders between historic Gaelic provinces of Cúige Uladh (*Ulster*) and Cúige Chonnacht (*Connacht*). The earthwork follows the line of trees moving from the centre to the upper left of the image. This area of the border near Cluain Eois also forms the Drumully Polyp, an anomaly of the border where it loops almost back on itself, creating an island of land cut off from the rest of the county.

Five materials are a taken from their original sites of extraction or production along the border: an HGV curtainside tarpaulin printed with a border crossing and building cut in two by the border; road signs (Ireland & UK); concrete blocks made using lime and clay from a mountain divided by the border, a polyurethane classical column; and Donegal Quartzite crazy paving. They were then inserted back into sites of historic or spatial significance, with one more material added each time, and texts to be read alongside each of the installations as dramaturge to the arranged architectural scenography. The materials and sites also reference a series of interviews conducted as a form of 'hedge school' – an Irish pedagogical precedent – with experts in themes from trade deals to folklore, or with manufacturers of each of the materials.

ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENT #5: THE PARK HOTEL, Ó MEITH, CO. LÚ *(Omeath, Co. Louth)*

The Park Hotel in Ó Meith lies at the very eastern end of the border overlooking Loch Cairlinn (*Carlingford Lough*). The hotel, now closed, was formerly an Irish college, and it was here that Irish revolutionary Pádraig Pearse wrote the last lines of the speech that would be given at the funeral of Irish republican Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in 1915. The following year Pearse would become a key figure in the Easter Rising, a critical event in the journey of Irish independence. Shortly after he was executed by the British at Kilmainham Gaol in Baile Átha Cliath (Dublin).

PÁDRAIG PEARSE

Excerpt from graveside oration at the funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, 1915

Life springs from death; and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations. The Defenders of this Realm have worked well in secret and in the open. They think that they have pacified Ireland. They think that they have purchased half of us and intimidated the other half. They think that they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fools, the fools! – they have left us our Fenian dead; and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Tom Keeley

Tom Keeley is an artist-historian based in Skibbereen, Ireland. He uses artistic practices to write and rethink architectural and landscape histories. This research-led 'topographic practice' generates site-specific outputs ranging from writing, printed matter and photography, to film, installation and performance. It studies the features of a place and goes beyond: asking how research methods, practices, and outcomes can also be site-specific. Keeley trained in landscape architecture at the University of Sheffield and architectural history at the Bartlett, where he is currently completing an AHRC-funded PhD in architectural design studying the architectures and landscapes of the Irish borderlands, under the supervision of Professors Jane Rendell and Barbara Penner. Previously he worked for The Architecture Foundation (London, UK), Storefront for Art and Architecture (New York, USA), and Space Caviar (Genoa, Italy). His work has been exhibited internationally including at the Venice Architecture Biennale, Salone del Mobile Milano, and the Istanbul Design Biennial. His writing has been featured in publications such as Places Journal, The Architectural Review, Building Material, MacGuffin, and Domus; and is held in the collections of the National Art Library and the School of Architecture Library at Princeton University. He is a lecturer at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL, and Cork Centre for Architectural Education.

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ABSENT BOUNDARIES OF REGULATION: THE HOUSEHOLD, THE LANDSCAPE AND THE DOMESTIC NOVEL

Angela Kyriacou Petrou

ABSTRACT

The paper examines the process of naturalising the 'country' as a practice of domestication, regulation and ultimately a consolidation of both domestic and colonial authority. It does so with a specific reference to Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814). Focusing on domestic order, it foregrounds the premise on which peripheral locations and isolated spaces of the domestic realm, far removed from the centres of power, became intangible strongholds of putatively political power. The absent spatial boundaries of the household and the landscape are explored as operative components in the creation of domestic and national order. Focusing on matters of spatiality examined in the domestic novel, the paper delves into the imperceptible mechanisms of erasure which are indiscernibly entangled with the normalisation of the body, the domestic realm and consequentially the remote and unfamiliar bodies and territories of outlying colonial regions. The paper further investigates the different ways in which absent boundaries facilitate the endorsement of hegemonic power, exploring how the borders of both space and individual consciousness are permeated through invisible mechanisms of regulation. The ensuing permeation of power is explored as a process of dematerialisation of both the female body and the material constituents of space. Emptied of intuition, the individual domestic woman forgoes the constraints of her material self and acts instead as a public body. Similarly, the landscape exchanges its material substance for an idealised scene, emphasising extended views. Acting as a fixed, unchangeable spatial backdrop, the unpopulated and timeless landscape is denied practices of human labour, naturalising and consequently appropriating the actions of domestic life as a centre of authority.

INTRODUCTION

With the newly unified territory of the Kingdom of Great Britain and continuing process of land enclosures and land improvement, the nineteenth-century English landscape became increasingly significant in relation to national identity. Conceptions of space drew attention to the uninterrupted, borderless terrain of the nation as well as the unified enclosed land parcels which came to represent the ideal English landscape. The process of enclosure translated into an aesthetic rebranding of English space, turning farmland into picturesque scenes where human habitation was erased. This empty landscape embodied the idealised image of the nation; estate buildings, meandering paths, lakes, mounds and ruins replaced the cultivated fields and peasant labour. The observer perceived the landscape as an amplified aesthetic experience. Seeing from the estate window or the knoll, the viewer actively searched for prospects of the landscape looking for distant views and sublime backdrops to frame the tranquil borderless grounds. The ha-ha was a characteristic feature of the English landscape garden and played an important role in the design of the unbound view from the country estate. A concealed trench functioning as a hidden boundary, the ha-ha was imperceptible to the viewer but created the appearance of a continuous idyllic landscape.

Set in the English countryside of Northamptonshire, Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* sets the scene for just such a landscape. Written in 1814, the novel mirrored the convergence of different national and political circumstances, as well as the cultural norms of the period. Named after the country estate, the novel foregrounds relations of space and spatiality, centring around family life. The familiar domestic space of the household is situated alongside the remote colonial plantation; the two sites act as counterpoints in the novel disclosing the tension between England's domestic and overseas territories. While the space of the domestic sphere is foregrounded, Antigua remains distant and unfamiliar – an outlying territory which appears to be merely incidental. Nevertheless, the patriarch's journey to the island is central to the plot and the assumed, unspoken funds from the implied slave plantation are equally essential for the land improvements and upkeep of the Mansfield Park family estate. The novel navigates the ambiguity and increasing significance of land as Austen locates the novel in the classic heartland of rural England, but at the same time centring the plot on the absence of the landowner away in the distant colony. Simultaneous disjunctions between local and overseas space and between the private space of the home and the public realm set up a series of binary underpinnings through Austen's narrative, emulating a seemingly incidental but purposefully absent force of regulation.

Austen's assertion that she intended to write a novel about 'ordination' directs us to explore this notion through its various possible implications; that is, by understanding it as referring to the act of ordaining the leading characters but also associating it with the process of putting things in order, the ideological function of being depicted or understood as 'ordinary' and the advocation of the practice of land ordnance.[1] Such broader associations implicate the novel in an extensive use of narratives of authority over body and space, positioning domestic action as a meaningful counterpart to colonial conduct.

The paper initially explores the domestic realm, which is utilised to instil order and create conditions for a stable home. From this domestic centre, actions, behaviour and the identity of the family are regulated and controlled. Acting as agents of another body, women of nineteenth-century domestic fiction assumed their role as the ambassadors of absolute power, exercising a moderated supervision within the domestic sphere. Surrendering their individual selves and relinquishing their subjectivity and

1 Six months before the completion of *Mansfield Park*, Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra about her new novel; 'Now I will try to write of something else, & it shall be a complete change of subject – ordination.' (Jane Austen, *Jane Austen's Letters to her sister Cassandra and others*, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 298.

material presence, they practised an internalised form of domestic authority, effectively regulating the household to the degree that they disciplined the self. The paper further examines the manner in which processes of domestication and ordaining of the protagonists becomes a way of augmenting patriarchal power as well as of maintaining the effective regulation of the household and the nation. Through an examination of Nancy Armstrong's work on the domestic novel and Michel Foucault's discussion of modern power, the actions and authority of the domestic woman are explored.[2] A closer look at the novel will also reveal how private actions of the home were positioned in the public realm. This involved a constant synchronisation of the private space of the home with the public context, creating a link between the home and the outside world.

In the second part of the paper, (The Imperceptible Boundaries of Space), the regulation of domestic space is investigated in the context of the landscape, connecting ideas of self-regulation and spatial boundlessness, through an examination of the ha-ha. By eliminating boundaries and creating the appearance of a unified landscape, the ha-ha is understood as an actual and conceptual mechanism of control, a concealed mechanism of authority over both the landscape and the viewer's perception, encouraging the erasure of boundaries.

With reference to Edward Said's seminal text, *Culture and Imperialism*, the paper discusses the idea of colonial space and its relation to the domestic realm. The focus of the paper foregrounds the idea of material erasure and absence, investigating the imperceptible mechanisms of control which rely on the absence of physical boundaries as well as the absence of labour. The novel is examined for the ambiguities that arise from these impalpable conditions of regulation that shift between the individual and the spatial, the material and immaterial, moral judgement and intuition.

THE SOCIAL BODY: CONDUCT BOOKS AND THE DOMESTIC NOVEL

In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain, conduct books and domestic novels operated as educational literature for domestic women aimed at guiding them in matters of proper moral conduct and behaviour. Acting as educational manuals, conduct books were aimed at instructing women about household management but also delineated their identity in relation to behaviour and thought. Domestic novels later adopted and developed the conduct books' instructions, cultivating a very particular type of femininity, and in this manner greatly influenced how women reflected on their own identity as well as how they considered themselves as a part of the public arena.

In her book *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, Nancy Armstrong explores narratives of domestic fiction and the ways in which they became involved in the construction of the female self. Armstrong emphasises the important role that women played at the centre of power, a power that was contained specifically within the domestic sphere. The authority of the domestic woman – revealed through the domestic novel – is understood as a paradoxical form of power. In contrast to her male counterpart, her strength lies not in the forceful command and disciplining of others, but instead, in what Foucault designates as self-regulation: an internalisation of discipline.[3] Actions, behaviour, thoughts and moral standing converge in the domestic woman's individual identity; in this way domestic authority does not operate on others, but instead through and on the self.

2 Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); David Macey and Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* (Picador, 2003), p. 32.

3 David Macey and Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended* (Picador, 2003), p. 32.

The nineteenth-century English modern woman was branded with very particular traits of subjectivity and distinct criteria which related to her presence, her actions and her supervision of the household. This constructed identity defined her entire being, delineating her household duties, her role in relation to the patriarch, her physical presence, her public existence and her consciousness. Readers of domestic novels identified themselves with seemingly instinctive, natural thoughts related to issues of domestic desire and marriage, which were performed by the actions of worthy, husband-seeking heroines. Domestic fiction separated the sensation of desire from factors of wealth, religion and politics, concentrating on desire as a fully subjective notion. Such narratives were acted out in a carefully constructed, interiorised realm wherein the heroines who embodied seemingly independent sentiments acquired authority in the household. The domestic woman assumed the model conduct book role, internalising a series of social norms as 'natural in the self'.[4] Consequently, the domestic novel seemingly isolated the domestic sphere from the disorder and ambiguities of real life through undetectable strategies of regulation. The new 'narrative' woman that emerged was defined by an identity which was understood to disassociate her from existing social political and economic structures. Through her conformity, 'the domestic woman exercised a form of power that appeared to have no political force at all […]. It was the power of domestic surveillance.'[5] Such gendered forms of identity determined 'how people learned to think of themselves'.[6] Together, the conduct book and the domestic novel operated as powerful instruments of regulation. Enacted by the subjects which were affected by it, this invisible force was embedded in domestic actions and practices operating on the 'microlevels' of everyday life.[7] In his lecture: *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault identifies how such systems of power emerged in western society from the seventeenth through to the nineteenth centuries.[8] He outlines the transition from sovereign power, which used visible coercive mechanisms of control, to an increase in social mechanisms of control, which operated from peripheral positions as an invisible, distributed force.

Foucault pursues an understanding of power which looks precisely at the limits of its authority. Contrary to the visible power of centralised rule, he discusses how modern power violates the boundaries of protective regulation and instead utilises disciplinary methods which intervene and become assimilated into social relationships. Investigating what he calls 'forms of subjugation', Foucault examines the actual procedures of control and their physical execution through social relations, institutions and organisational procedures.[9]

Foucault reveals how, as the production of scientific knowledge expanded in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, particular ideologies and conventions became inseparable from the technologies of power, while individuals were compelled to conform to the evolving discourse of normality that arose out of new scientific knowledge. Seemingly natural, acts of conformity were carried out by individuals who voluntarily followed the emerging cultural norms. Through self-surveillance and self-regulatory practices, the force of conformity was imperceptibly distributed through the actions and behaviour of individuals. This disciplinary power was particularly associated with normalisation of the individual and the body.

Foucault recognises the development of a new technology of power which was applied to a social body in the second half of the eighteenth century. Rather than acting on individuals, he identifies 'biopower' as a power structure which is applied to humanity as a species. In this instance, power is addressed to a group, generalising the type of behaviour that belongs to that particular group of people in such a way that they act collectively.

4 Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 9.

5 Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 19.

6 Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 16.

7 Macey and Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, p. 32.

8 Macey and Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, p. 32.

9 Macey and Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, p. 32.

This massifying power does not act independently but often embeds itself in individual disciplinary power intensifying the effect of its combined invisible force.

Through a thorough examination of the novel, we witness how the disciplining of the individual body acts in tandem with the regulation and appropriation of behavioural traits which are typical of the western modern woman. It is precisely through such invisible technologies of power that the fragile, dematerialised body of the female protagonist, Fanny Price, takes form, but at the same time is distinctly united with and visible within the social body of the middle-class domestic woman.

THE IMMATERIAL BODY

Writing for the emerging middle class, the novelists and educational reformers of the nineteenth century placed the domestic woman in opposition to the formerly dominant aristocratic female, whose conduct epitomised the 'immoral' extremes of social life: craving power and desirability through flaunting her wealth and family name. The labouring woman was also considered inappropriate as a figure for respectable domestic duties, as her labouring body gave significance to materiality and to the surface of the body rather than its depth. With an emphasis on moral depth, domestic fiction produced a woman 'whose value resided chiefly in her femaleness rather than in traditional signs of status, a woman who possessed psychological depth rather than a physically attractive surface.'[10] The substance of the modern woman lay in the depths of her identity, emphasising female morality, education, and sensibility, as well as skills of management and planning for the home – the attributes of the desirable female were firmly located in her inner self. All forms of materialism were abhorrent. As such, the body of the modern woman was made immaterial.[11] The resultantly inconsequential body produced a figure characterised by compliance and motionlessness, displaying no resistance to her assigned role.

The emergence of the domestic woman generated a new force, a form of power which had no material reality, that was not implemented through a palpable bodily presence and used no suppressive force. Instead it effected its power through passive virtue and moral example. The regulation of such authority was located firmly in the home, but its influence on the real world extended far beyond the domestic realm. This 'middle-class power' as Armstrong refers to it, was 'a form of power that work[ed] through language,' representing a specifically constructed ideal of feminine subjectivity as a natural part of the female self.[12]

MANSFIELD PARK: AUTHORITY THROUGH AND ON THE SELF

Sir Thomas Bertram undertakes a treacherous journey to the West Indies to restore financial stability to his plantation in Antigua, leaving his country estate for over a year. During his prolonged absence, the house falls into disarray and becomes a site of moral disorder. It becomes apparent that the household loses stability whilst the patriarch is away.

Foregrounding the need for effective authority and orderliness, the absence of Sir Thomas forms a critical part of the narrative. Austen focuses on the idea of the absent patriarch in order to highlight the fact that Sir Thomas requires agents of his authority to effectively administer control in his absence. His domineering rule does not itself secure the family's loyalty, leaving the Bertrams with a feeling of liberation which leads them to act out their desires while he is away. Negotiating the aspirations and social position of the Bertram family members, Mansfield Park explores the problematic behaviour and the anxieties of inhabitants

10 Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 76.

11 Around the 1830s, the discourse of sexuality shifted from censuring the aristocracy and instead aimed at the labouring population as a 'target of moral reform' (Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 67). Armstrong shows how the working-class population also became embraced in the moral education that the treatises were attempting. Politically aggressive groups of the labouring population were viewed as being in need of education and development rather than deserving of forced restraint. The use of oppressive power against dissident factions of the population was not effective in achieving long-term control. Instead, surveillance was thought a more efficient form of control (Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 20).

12 Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 13; p. 33.

and visitors to the Mansfield Park estate.

The novel is positioned in relation to the three sisters, Mrs Bertram, Mrs Norris and Mrs Price, who are held to account for misguided supervision and the mismanagement of their respective households. They act as a backdrop to the unmarried female characters of the Mansfield Park estate, who experience dilemmas and anxieties through their searches for eligible husbands, alternately embodying and rejecting their internalised commitments to the role of the ideal domestic woman.

The novel reveals the authority that is gained by Fanny Price, following her from a subordinate status as the adopted niece, to a pivotal position in the household. The authority that she acquires is not a result of female empowerment but the outcome of conforming to a feminine identity which paradoxically places her at the centre of domestic power. Fanny's actions are set against the other female characters who transgress the boundaries of propriety. The novel also exposes the struggles of the heroine as well as her commitment to moral propriety; we witness the limitation of her emotions and the restrictions of her fragile body.

Sir Thomas Bertram's prolonged absence from the family home, Mansfield Park estate, generates a feeling of independence for the Bertram sisters, who are thankful for their father's departure to Antigua. Their newfound sense of freedom does not acknowledge moral boundaries. The older daughter, Maria, does not appear to have internalised feminine values prescribed by the conduct books. The narrative reveals the state of mind that guides her decisions and eventually leads to her misconduct. Without proper guidance, Maria cannot recognise moral boundaries, insofar as while her father's overbearing command seeks order and respectability it fails to instil moral value. As a result, her reliance on his physical presence to limit her actions becomes critical for shaping her future.

We are introduced to the protagonist Fanny Price at the age of ten, when she is adopted into the Bertram household. Our first impression of Fanny is of someone who has an unremarkable presence; we recognise the fragility and indistinct nature of her appearance. She is neither captivating nor repulsive. We observe her difficulty in carrying out simple physical activities. Austen repeatedly conveys that Fanny's strength does not lie in her body; she cannot carry out chores, endure prolonged exercise or be exposed to the sun: 'clouds are now coming up, and she will not suffer from the heat as she would have done then.'[13] Fanny does not like to draw attention to herself; she is after all not strikingly beautiful. She often prefers to withdraw from conversations. Upon witnessing awkward encounters, such as Sir Thomas' return home, she tries to recede or disappear. Just like the invisible guard of the panopticon, Fanny 'screened from notice herself, saw all that was passing before her'.[14] When receiving praise, she turns further into the window, trying to disappear from view. Afraid of attention and public exposure, she acts in such a way as to obscure her presence and accommodate those around her. Committed to stillness, her fragile figure recedes from view, seeking tranquillity and stability.

Fanny's absent body is set against the visitor Mary Crawford, whose strong, active figure is reflected in an equally striking mindset. In comparing the two characters, Austen reveals how the perception of the self relates directly to the physical body. Mary's strong figure characterises her as a dynamic personality. Constantly looking for new experiences and action, Mary gains confidence through her active pursuits: she openly expresses her opinions, her restlessness and her urge for novelty. After a walk around the estate, Fanny needs to rest, while Mary needs to move: 'I must move […] resting fatigues me. I have looked across the ha–ha till I am weary.'[15] Contemplating worldly experiences beyond the boundaries of the estate, Mary

13 Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2003), p. 65.

14 Austen, *Mansfield Park*, p. 172.

15 Austen, *Mansfield Park*, p. 96.

is animated. She finds power in movement and cannot be still. Conversely, Fanny finds solace in stillness and observation rather than in physical strength.

Fanny's motionlessness enhances her capacity for observation. Pleasing everyone, Fanny is 'all things to all people'.[16] She makes the family the centre of importance, trivialising her own desires. Armstrong reminds us that the domestic woman was to be intensely aware but imperceptible in her supervision of the household. The promotion, harmony and stability of the household depends on her restraint and her ability to 'disappear into the woodwork'.[17] Absent in body, Fanny is an undeniably dependable counterpart to patriarchal control and domestic orderliness, safeguarding and enhancing Sir Thomas' authority.

Just as the narrative gradually shifts from adventurous expeditions, hazardous travel and theatricals to the isolated domestic sphere, so the readers' instinctive empathy for the positive, animated personality of cosmopolitan Mary is progressively contradicted by a steady commitment to the poor-spirited heroine and paradoxically repositioned, through gradual transposition, towards the motionless static protagonist that is Fanny Price. Austen's commitment to 'social stasis' generates a naturalised displacement from Mary's lively character.[18] This relocation takes the form of undetectable casual transpositions; the reader is progressively and unintentionally drawn towards Fanny Price, who is centred within the domestic sphere.

In the second part of the novel, the narrative becomes firmly anchored around the home. From this position, we encounter the weighty consolation of domestic centring, drawing the reader to a secure indisputable viewing position. As Fanny and her cousin Edmund share the evening view of the woods at Mansfield Park, the tranquil setting transposes them to a mutual awareness of the scene before them. Fanny alludes to the merits of the scene, contemplating the view before her in the 'proper' frame of mind: 'Here's harmony! [...] When I look out on such a night as this, I feel as if there could be neither wickedness nor sorrow in the world.'[19] Fanny deliberates on how the sublimity of nature allows people to be 'carried more out of themselves,' while Edmund suggests that gazing at the view allows Fanny 'to feel.'[20] What she feels, however, is not so much her own judgement as an instructed taste for nature. Fanny and Edmund's shared vision is significant: he reflects on her feelings and not his own, encouraging her thoughtfulness. Such shared contemplation compensates for the spontaneous, innate emotions which, unlike Mary, Fanny cannot acknowledge. Edmund endorses the moral instruction involved within the shared view: 'they are much to be pitied who have not been taught to feel, in some degree, as you do.'[21] Seeing through his eyes, Fanny is prevented from engaging with the here and now. The landscape and its tranquillising effect substitute Fanny's own viewpoints and inhibit introspection of her true self. Fanny's identity is transposed onto, and at the same time shaped by, a shared vision; the sublimity of nature makes the private self a part of a collective image. The process of self-forgetting acts as a stabilising mechanism which replaces reflexive thoughts with mutual sensibilities, but also re-establishes a connection of the domestic space and self with the regulated public realm. As a result, Fanny's instincts are often suppressed, her observations are censored, her emotions reflect an ideological, normalised vision rather than her own sentiments, and the reader is comfortingly assured that the wickedness of the world is vanquished by this scene.

16 Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 70.

17 Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 80.

18 Lionel Trilling, *The Opposing Self* (New York: The Viking Press, 1969), p. 211.

19 Austen, *Mansfield Park*, p. 231.

20 Austen, *Mansfield Park*, p. 105.

21 Austen, *Mansfield Park*, p. 105.

The intangible domestic authority that is instilled in the domestic woman is achieved through the process of establishing and maintaining strong moral boundaries in relation to the household, which, Armstrong has argued, results in a separation of the domestic realm from the political world. This separation rewards the isolated household with a very particular authority, in which it gains an advantage of centring and of translating external political and economic factors. Acknowledging such a separation, Edward Said argues that external factors become lodged inwards, so that history becomes translated through the language of domesticity: 'strategies which shift the public and outward to the private and inward create a deliberate detachment from actual events of public life.'[22] The emergence of the domestic realm as a stronghold of domestic authority not only subjugated the domestic woman in a position of moral restraint, but also normalised external political events by assimilating them into the household.

The shared moral atmosphere, including investment in the sublimity of nature and in the moral responsibilities of the domestic woman, created a mechanism for normalising such ways of thinking, formulating them as subjective and thus making them ordinary. There is a twofold process that takes place, in fact: while there is a distinct separation of the private domestic space from the public realm there is also an ensuing reconnection. It is this alternating separation and reconnection which creates opportunities for diverting political events through the domestic realm: making them ordinary and stabilizing them before they are redefined as public, triggering a reversal of the function of the disconnected country estate. The domestic space does not merely act as a defensive space which excludes external factors but operates as a backdrop from which a shared public position is reclaimed. The inferred separation of the domestic realm from the outside intensifies the household as a powerful structure of authority which influences both the internal domestic and the external political realm. This is achieved through the normalisation of the familial scene as well as through the ordination and regulation of the characters related to it.

THE IMPERCEPTIBLE BOUNDARIES OF SPACE; THE INTERNALIZED BOUNDARY OF THE SELF

Visions of the landscape and the stability of domestic space acted as the backdrop to domestic fiction and perfected the realisation of the domestic scene, generating a shared language and ideology. Mansfield Park demonstrates how Austen's manipulation of spatial concepts sustained the moral teachings of the novel. The landscape was interpreted not directly as a physical environment but through a set of values representing the viewer's moral judgement.[23] A reading of the land which connected it to acts of viewing and disconnected it from material production and wealth works in parallel with the protocols of the conduct book: authority lodged in the domestic realm is paralleled with a new authority over the landscape.[24]

The open structure of supervision and self-awareness that is generated in Foucault's panopticon is a regulating mechanism that functions on many levels in the domestic novel.[25] The absence of supervision characterises both psychological and spatial structures of control. A fundamental characteristic of this is related to invisible constraints which enhance authority but also regulate moral and physical transpositions. The absence of physical boundaries is supplemented by depth of thought, which requires the domestic woman to sustain a constant recognition of limits, but also acts as an invisible extension of power for the patriarch. The mechanism utilised for defining limits in the domestic narrative functions correspondingly through the use of visual, spatial and landscape elements.

22 Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus Ltd, 1993), p. 90.

23 This abstraction of the landscape occurred at a time when land was the centre of production and investment – both locally and in colonial territories.

24 Raymond Williams focuses on disconnection of the landscape from agricultural practice; 'a working country is hardly ever a landscape.' (Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City* (Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 120.)

25 Leach, Neil. "Part V Poststructuralism, Michel Foucault." Leach, Neil. *Rethinking Architecture* (London: Francis & Taylor, 1997), pp. 329-357.

The ha-ha is a distinctive feature of eighteenth-century landscape design and enables extended views across the estate property without distinguishing its boundary line. Seen from the window of the home, the limits of the domestic domain appear to extend effortlessly across the rural landscape, offering boundless, uninterrupted prospects. Optical limitations of the domestic sphere are invisible; the views appear to negate the isolation of the household, instead visually reconnecting it to the surrounding public domain. Apart from the unlimited views, the country estate is also understood as an authoritative scene which represents power. Mary Crawford claims that 'A man might represent the county with such an estate'; once again the isolated country home is mentally repositioned into the public realm.[26] The absent boundaries designate the position of those who are associated with it, testing or enhancing their flaws or authority. The unlimited views across the estate enhance the power of the patriarch; the 'gentleman's unconstrained view' represents his ability to 'act objectively for his nation' intensifying his authority and ascertaining his public position.[27] Rachel Crawford describes how 'the unbounded prospect […] was transformed into a moral and political quality of the man of the property'.[28]

Viewing across and beyond his idyllic estate, the landowner acts as the universal observer, unavoidably annexing the surrounding landscape to his commanding gaze. Judgements regarding his own property extend naturally well beyond the ha-ha, embodying the expanding territory. Sir Thomas' actions are reinforced by such an omniscient view; knowledgeable judgement made in relation to his estate extends its authority beyond the boundary line of his property. As with the novel, the ha-ha advocates boundless vision: we are assured that Sir Thomas' command of the Mansfield Park estate extends to territories beyond Northamptonshire, to his colonial plantation in Antigua. As the patriarch of the family home, Sir Thomas' status is directly represented by the land and building, which function as setting but also 'denote the character and social responsibility' of the landowner.[29] The role of the rural estate as part of England's patriarchal identity was as embedded in the land as in the owner.

For the domestic woman, the open landscape sanctions a very different kind of power: one that binds her authority to self-regulation and internalised powers of restraint. The absent boundary urges her vigilant surveillance but also highlights the rebellious transgression of boundaries enacted by the morally compromised. What we observe through the narrative actions in Mansfield Park is a testing of the moral perception of characters which regulates actions in the absence of physical restraint but does not prohibit passage or transgression beyond boundaries. We have already witnessed the moral challenge that is faced by Maria Bertram, who does not recognise moral boundaries and limitations during her father's absence. While the discourse regarding the domestic woman is submerged in regulation and limits, her position in the domestic space also confronts her with a notional and visual boundlessness, generating a potentially dangerous sense of freedom. The visually endless rural landscape around the country estate has no visible border. Marked by absence, the boundary is physical and perceived, yet at the same time it remains invisible. The immaterial but essential spatial boundary binds action to space through the necessary restraints of moral conscience. Maria Bertram is seduced precisely by openness, failing to observe the distinctions that should ideally be defined by the confines of space. On the other hand, by replicating and at the same time inverting the function of the ha-ha, Fanny's effectively omniscient vision regulates the seemingly boundless narrative landscape. Despite its apparent absence, the spatial boundary continues to exercise its authority over moral conscience. The actions of both Thomas Bertram and Fanny Price are thus imperceptibly

26 Austen, *Mansfield Park*, p. 149.

27 Rachel Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and the Vernacular Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 14.

28 Crawford, *Poetry, Enclosure, and the Vernacular Landscape*, p. 15.

29 Alistair Duckworth, T*he Improvement of the Estate* (London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 39.

augmented by that which is not immediately or physically present, operating beyond the immediate positions of space, time and consciousness. Their narrative position and authority are defined by what is not there. The narrative leads us to collaborate in this performance. How does something with no visual tangibility have such a strong presence? How does something with no limit or boundary make one feel restrained? How can the authority of absence be so powerfully present? The functioning of Foucault's panopticon is multiplied here. In this scene, there is a simultaneous magnitude and casualness. The absence of perceptible boundaries produces a placid setting while simultaneously acting as a formidable line of regulation. Although the language of the landscape is inherently ocular, the visual absence of the boundary becomes accommodated into subconscious thought on behalf of the protagonists and the reader. The apparent materiality of space is paired with the detailed actuality of the novel. Nature and narrative collaborate to secure their hold on the spectator. Their interplay secures territory and action; it is a slice of passive authority which reassures us of a 'natural' order and of moral authenticity through the omniscient view of the patriarch and the internalised boundedness of the heroine.

THE DOMESTIC OVERFLOWS INTO THE PUBLIC

The East room, an unused room in Mansfield Park house, acts as Fanny's space of refuge. The vacant room is used by Fanny as a space for writing, reading and contemplation: 'Her plants, her books […] and her works of charity were all within reach […] and pinned against the wall a small sketch of a ship […] by William with HMS Antwerp at the bottom in letters as tall as the main mast.'[30] From watering her plants and advising her cousin about acting in the play to taking an imaginary journey with her brother to the colonial territories, Fanny is synchronously inside and outside domestic space. In her room Fanny can resume her preferred cultural actions of writing and reading, which allow her to appropriate the inner world of the domestic environment. In this space, a transposition takes place: a shift beyond the home, toward a shared culture permeating the threshold between the domestic space and outside world: 'the domestic overflows into the public domain.'[31] The weighty boundary of the domestic space is thus proven permeable: the East Room, the most isolated room in the estate, is seamlessly connected to the outside world. In this instance, acts of writing carried out within the domestic space allow Fanny to dissolve the physical boundary surrounding her activities, enhancing her public identity. This spatial transposition upholds the sanctity of self and of domestic space while the physical boundary between the domestic and the outer world becomes thin enough to be permeable. This double transposition constitutes a process that redeems the most banal actions and recasts them into culturally refined acts. Once again, the separation between the domestic and the public is denied, therefore augmenting the authority of the humble domestic woman. The most neglected room in Mansfield Park becomes the conduit through which private life is given public form. Despite the devised separation that is constructed between the domestic and the public realm, the creation of a public self establishes a key part in female identity. The distinctiveness of the domestic woman defined by the educational treatises created a familiar moral and cultural identity. This identity not only acknowledged the personal feminine self but also defined a public identity enacted exclusively within the domain of the domestic sphere. This public image of the domestic woman endorsed her moral image, while simultaneously creating a unifying identity. The moral self of the private realm contributed to a shared common idea about the national self which saw women act out their roles as wives and mothers in an overtly public domain under a united identity of moral duty.

30 Austen, *Mansfield Park*, p. 141.

31 Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 53.

32 Claiming the rural estate as the site of the archetypal domestic woman, a model of country life developed for the emerging middle-class population, allowing 'competing interest groups to ignore their economic origins and coalesce around a single domestic ideal.' (Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 69.)

33 Particularly as rural estates were typically financed by colonial slave plantations, as in the case of the Bertram family.

ABSENT LABOUR

Armstrong asserts that the novel appropriated the model of country life, formerly associated with the aristocracy, as the setting of the domestic narrative.[32] The adoption of the country estate, however, relied on re-negotiating its former status. As a site for the modern woman, the household was purposely separated from external factors, concealing the source of the revenue that sustained it. Economy was vaguely understood to depend on investment rather than any kind of trade or craft associated with the family.[33] The household was 'made into a self-enclosed world whose means of support were elsewhere, invisible, removed from the scene.'[34] Just as the female body was asked to deny or disavow its materiality and its association with labour, so the country house denied the economic foundation of its maintenance. This denial of material existence introduced another dimension of absence to the correlated realms of the landscape and the self.

Thomas Gainsborough's Mr and Mrs Andrews (1750) depicts the eponymous newlyweds in a scene into which the readers of the domestic novel could project themselves.[35] The Andrews are sitting to one side, allowing the viewer to see their property, which has been enlarged and consolidated by their marriage. The old oak tree anchors the scene in the context of a respectable domestic and natural heritage, which they appear to have inherited. Situated within the empty, houseless landscape, Mrs Andrews is nonetheless ideologically construed as ready to perform her natural duties of household management. regulation, which 'became a matter of good taste and a way of displaying domestic virtue,' in this way, her actual labour remained imperceptible.[36]

The passive virtues of the ideal woman are accordingly framed by an equally passive and empty landscape, where agricultural labour is made impalpable. Images of the landscape and the qualities of the domestic woman thus align to produce a representation marked by absence: the absence of visible boundaries and the absence of labour. Taken for granted, the agencies of production and the subsequent wealth that it produced are made to appear 'natural'. Just as the domestic woman has instinctive natural qualities, which produce a well-ordered household, so the inherently abundant land produces itself. The ideal domestic scene and the ideal landscape are created in the absence of labour. Such duties no longer included practical tasks that involved labour, but were instead activities of household regulation, which 'became a matter of good taste and a way of displaying domestic virtue', in this way, her actual labour remained imperceptible.[36]

The passive virtues of the ideal woman are accordingly framed by an equally passive and empty landscape, where agricultural labour is made impalpable. Images of the landscape and the qualities of the domestic woman thus align to produce a representation marked by absence: the absence of visible boundaries and the absence of labour. Taken for granted, the agencies of production and the subsequent wealth that it produced are made to appear 'natural'. Just as the domestic woman has instinctive natural qualities, which produce a well-ordered household, so the inherently abundant land produces itself. The ideal domestic scene and the ideal landscape are created in the absence of labour.[37]

The omission and suppression of associations of use and everyday practice is a central aspect of the reading of land and space involved here. Although constructs of the landscape and how it changed have a very strong and immediate physical and visual presence – an unquestionable reality marked by social and physical change through intensified agricultural production – their visual portrayal is filtered through representational processes. These processes conceal the actual agricultural practices.

34 Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 69.

35 https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/thomas-gainsborough-mr-and-mrs-andrews; Many of the biggest landowners in England, who were often leaders in agricultural reform, commissioned paintings which showed such idyllic images of their rural estates, where acts of labour and modern agricultural features were omitted. Taken for granted, the means of production and the subsequent wealth that it produced are made to appear as innate in the pastoral abundance of the painted scene and not as something that is the result of labour (Hugh Prince, 'Art and Agrarian Change 1710-1815' in *The Iconography of Landscape*, ed, Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 99-101.)

36 Conduct books initially incorporated advice about the preparation of medicines, care of livestock, and cooking (Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p. 63).

37 Prince, *Art and Agrarian Change 1710-1815*, pp. 99-101.

Suppressing the social dimension of the landscape, including human labour as a basic critical part of its production, this representational process directly complements the one that produces the domestic woman. In the absence of labour, the land produces itself.[38] This process turns the overwhelmingly palpable view into an unconscious, insensible viewpoint. Landscape emerges as something independent from human action, relying only on nature for its presence. Like the ideologically normalised self of the modern woman, the autonomous landscape endorses concepts of fixity and stability. With no work and no evident source of wealth, the country house denies, at one and the same time, the labour of the domestic woman herself as well as the agricultural labourers and, inevitably, the slave labourers in Antigua that produce the invisible wealth of the rural estate.

THE CARTOGRAPHY OF HERENESS

Austen's narrative descriptions of space are modest: views, landscapes and interiors are mostly unobtrusive and incidental to the narrative. However, the impression of space is regulated in various ways. Instances of shared views present a palpable atmospheric scene, whereas other settings are represented through quantifiable features. Austen is concerned with establishing a scene that represented the setting with precision and accuracy.[39] The author knowingly portrays actual sites and spaces: environments, journeys and everyday actions which are consistent with historical events, actual locations, precise distances.[40] Accounts of visual relations – views, distances and boundaries – are never left to chance. We are entirely confident about the presence and portrayal of spatial relations. Actions in space are defined and ordered in relation to elements which portray stability and heritage such as old oak trees, church spires, gates, matured hedges, fireplaces; all of them act as points of reference: emblematic, sited, measured, traceable, recorded, discernible and perceptible. Spatial constructs are also supported by significant fictional incidents in the novel which occur in close relation to historic reality.[41] The realism of space and time is indisputable: the remoteness of unfamiliar territories, the vastness of the unbound landscape, the complex visualisation of perspective, the materiality of dirty plates. Through the novel, the actuality of spaces and events is naturalised and made ordinary. Yet, the extent to which the accuracy of place and event allows the narrative to achieve an undeniable authenticity and spatial hereness is to the same degree mitigated by the author's treatment of these incidents and sites as merely circumstantial.

Elements of stability are also found in the idyllic landscape, which is directly connected with the rural estate. The picturesque landscape, carefully designed to achieve muted seasonal variations, comprises of a composition of natural features, producing an unchanging scene that is devoid of cultivated land and scenes of everyday labour.[42] Unchanging and constant herself, Fanny tellingly admires the evergreen which provides a static view of nature. Like Fanny, it does not change, it remains predictable and reliable. Austen's novel nurtures an awareness and appreciation of elements related to fixity and stability; it brings us to this position through a recognition of the elements which define orderliness, gradually transposing the reader to a static notional centre of space.

Austen's careful descriptions of space focus on impartial but visually detailed renderings. They establish shared sensibilities, cultivating the tasteful qualities of culture and tradition. In other words, Austen does not treat space as a setting but as an objectified image of an ensemble of social relations. Just as with the cartographic ordnance map, the novel's accurately produced representations are 'stable, indisputable mirrors of reality […] quantitative and rational, such representations are also seen to be true and neutral.'[43]

38 Whilst the splendour of the country estates performed the task of 'complementing and ratifying the social position of the landowner,' the landscape connected to the estate was portrayed as natural, timeless and unchanging; its existence was maintained through a 'natural order': 'The actual men and women who rear the animals […] who trap the pheasants and partridges and catch the fish; who plant and manure and prune and harvest the fruit trees: these are not present; their work is all done for them by a natural order' (Williams, *The Country and the City*, p. 93; p. 32).

39 It is acknowledged that Austen wrote to her sister Cassandra, asking if Northamptonshire, the area where the novel is located, is 'a country of hedgerows.' (Jane Austen, *Jane Austen: Facts and Problems*, ed. R.W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 10).

40 Duckworth, *The Improvement of the Estate*, p. 28.

41 'The sense of contemporary actuality is fortified by street-names in real towns; consistent dates, culled from almanacs; journeys timed with atlases and time-tables; lawsuits, carefully checked with legal experts.' (Marylin Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 155).

As a map maker, Austen carefully constructs a distinct universal perspective, bringing things into view as matters to be ordered, reproducing a composed mapping of local and global spaces and producing a system of artificial geographies. Through a language of domestic abstraction, Austen creates a narrative map, establishing an objective 'passive authenticity,' marking place and authorising its appropriation from a distance.[44] Austen's mapping is an act of consolidation, bringing together the omniscient and the detailed view. Her representations of space and order unite culturally divergent conditions and transpose them into the space of the interior.

CONCLUSION

Edward Said views the novel as a 'domestic accompaniment to the imperial project.'[45] In Culture and Imperialism, Said distinguishes corresponding actions and readings between the spheres of the domestic and the overseas. Pairing domestic to colonial action, he identifies the family home as a 'microcosm of society.'[46] He produces a concurrent repositioning of historic events that brings together culture and politics, past and present. This 'contrapuntal' retelling, as he calls it, allows us to perceive domestic, local and overseas events as parallel actions: '[Austen] sees clearly that to hold and rule Mansfield Park is to hold and rule an imperial estate in close, not to say inevitable association with it. What assures the domestic tranquillity and attractive harmony of one is the productivity and regulated discipline of the other'[47] Said maintains that the presence of the colonial is merely incidental and barely existent in Mansfield Park, which is nevertheless scripted around a narrative of a wealthy British family estate supported by overseas colonial investments. Fanny's notorious questioning of her uncle about the trip to his colonial estate in Antigua is one of the few instances in which direct mention of the colonies is made: 'Did not you hear me ask him about the slave trade[…]?'[48] Said stresses the silence that follows Fanny's "awkward" question, indicating the lack of appropriate language that marks the limits or boundaries of representation. Her question however, is critical. Fanny asks her question not from a position of prioritising propriety and courtesy, but because she is demonstrating her vigilance and effective managerial skills. Her role of supervision and management of the domestic realm is not limited to the space of Mansfield Park. The domain of the domestic includes not only the home but also the imperial nation and thus, inevitably, its overseas territory.

Said notes that the outside (imperial) world becomes domesticated through the novel and hence 'principles become interiorised.'[49] Following the treacherous journeys, disruptive plays and family turmoil, the second part of the novel focuses on the home. Here, for Said, is where the Austen achieves 'consolidation of authority.'[50] Alongside the more evidently colonial spaces, Said showcases the seemingly inconsequential components of the domestic realm, which, like Fanny, command an increasingly binding and centralising role in the narrative process. Said refers to the incident of Fanny's first arrival to the Mansfield Park Estate, which can be read as one of the significant spatial dispositions that takes place at the beginning of the novel: 'Fanny, Edmund, and her aunt Norris negotiate where she is to live, read, and work, where fires are to be lit.'[51] His mention of this scene is significant as Fanny's initial and eventual status and 'position' in the house correspond to her ultimate value and authority.

42 Based on Edmund Burke's adaptation of the Georgian landscape, estate gardens integrated aspects of the sublime and the beautiful – nature was valued for the sublimity of its landscape, such as the mountains, cliffs and forests, which create a feeling of awe and amazement. Beauty was associated with smaller pleasing elements of nature such as flowers, trees and fields. The combination of these two elements made up a picturesque landscape, bringing together the more ordered patterning of beauty broken up by the irregularity of more rugged sublime terrain.

43 James Corner, 'The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention' in *Mappings*, ed. Denis Cosgrove (London: Reaktion, 1999) 213–252 (p. 202).

44 Corner, *The Agency of Mapping*, p. 224.

45 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 70

46 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 77

47 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 87.

48 Austen, *Mansfield Park*, p. 184.

49 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 93.

50 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 77.

51 Austen, *Mansfield Park*, p. 85.

The fireplace referred to in this scene is an immaterial but definitive component of the home which embodies both space and regulation; it has a spatial location as well as a centralising function. The fireplace, like Fanny, acts as an allusive haven of domestic unity, an essential spatial mechanism of domestic authority. Upon recognising her value and commitment, Sir Thomas arranges for a fire to be lit in Fanny's East Room on his return from Antigua. Here, space and action are again coupled; like the fire, Fanny is there to "comfort." As mechanisms of value and unity, both the fire and Fanny symbolise family: 'Fanny is both device and instrument'[52]; she draws us closer, centralising, refining and articulating her position well beyond the home. Normalised and imperceptible, her familial authority could not, at the same time, appear as more unremarkable and ordinary.

Just as the fireplace acts as a congenial space of convergence for the family, the hegemonic and patriarchal power of nineteenth-century England also appropriated the ordinary setting of the household as a site for consolidation of power. As explored through the novel, the immaterial boundaries of the home facilitated invisible mechanisms of control which became embedded in everyday domestic activities. Equally, the unbound views of the landscape functioned effortlessly to intensify the power of the patriarch. Operating as powerful centres of regulation, the invisible boundaries of the country estates produced normalised and decontextualised spaces of authority. Abstracted and signified as inert and static, the erasure of boundaries contradicted the material production of the site, erasing human labour and the historic becoming of the land which in turn produced an unbecoming of the material body.

52 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 85.

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Angela is an Associate Professor in the Architecture Department at the University of Nicosia, Cyprus. She completed her architecture degree, post graduate diploma and RIBA Part III in London, where she was born and lived until 2001. She has recently completed a masters in English literature and cultural context.

Her research interests explore how colonial history has defined places and landscapes as passive sites and inert matter which are disconnected from labour and material practices. Through the examination of historical and literary texts her research examines how ground-truthing and mapping of entangled landscapes attempts to explore connections between territories, land practices, matter and stories of lived space.

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'EQUALLY LIKE A BEGINNING AND AN END': EDGE-LANDS AND THRESHOLD CONDITIONS

Amy Brookes

ABSTRACT

This paper was developed while sitting on the doorstep of my flat, inhabiting the line-thickness of a boundary, and lingering within the space between. It is an attempt to dwell on the threshold which is traced onwards into the fictional spaces of three sf novels: Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*, Ada Palmer's *Too Like The Lightning*, and Andrea Hairston's *Mindscape*. These speculative works are considered alongside and through works of art, architecture and spatial theory which address the spatial and social construction of thresholds, to reflect on the practice and representation of technologies of the boundary, the 'borders, laws, doors, … and scalpels' described by Sophie Lewis.

While in *Exit West* the doorway collapses distance into the thickness of a shadow, in these fictions this threshold is also drawn out, blurred and mutable, until the space between becomes an inhabited depth. From the trench surrounding a home in *Too Like The Lightning*, to the strips of land between settlement and barrier in *Mindscape*, these spatial edge-lands act as what Jane Rendell refers to as transitional spaces between forms of social organization.

These are the gaps and the spaces of overlap; they create social and emotional distance which can reinforce patterns of othering and segregation, but they also act as spaces apart from the worlds they border, ripe with the utopian potential of any such cracks in the world machine.

This article was developed during those suspended moments of 2020 and 2021, while sat on the top step of the stairs which led into my flat. The surfaces of this threshold I so often stepped over, my thoughts already elsewhere, imprinted themselves on the soft skin of my hands and thighs as I curled up in the open doorway. This is a space that is not quite the street but is not home either. It is not one or another, but a gap that is neither and an overlap which is both. The versions of myself I perform, the rules which govern behaviour on either side of this boundary, do not apply here. It is a space *in* between.

In her work on transitional spaces, Jane Rendell discusses the Narkomfin building as a transitional space, where 'transitional' objects and spaces are those 'located in the overlap'.[1] The Narkomfin building was initially conceived as an experimental form of housing designed around a series of social condensers – shared spaces that would provide opportunities for solidarity and community located alongside apartments which ranged from self-contained flats to communal dwellings for larger collectivised groups. It was intended to foster and support social change, to encourage new ways of living together, and to act as a transitional space into a more socialist future. Rendell argues that the act of writing can create similar sites for change by setting texts alongside one another 'to create a place of potential overlap in the mind of the reader,' and create a transitional space into other ways of understanding.[2]

In this article I dwell in the possibility of transitional spaces, between the real and the fictional, between practice and research, between the world as we encounter it and the futures we strive to build. I am guided by three works of sf whose narratives linger on spatial thresholds; *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid (2017), *Too Like The Lightning* by Ada Palmer (2016), and *Mindscape* by Andrea Hairston (2006).[3] I will focus on the spaces in these novels which exist within the boundary to examine the ways in which they allow their inhabitants to construct or consider change.

Each of these novels explores the geo-political enactment of borders and the implications for those who live within and between them.[4] They all explore a future Earth and use the tropes, scale and estrangement of sf to prompt critical reflection on both the spatial and social construct of the border. *Exit West* draws on the trope of the portal; an opening which instantly connects here with there, and uses it to punch holes in the fabric of our contemporary world. It is a global what-if story which remains steadfastly intimate, tracing the lives and encounters that are made possible by this dissolution of distance. While the doorways in *Exit West* circumvent the spatial mechanisms of bordering, Ada Palmer's *Too Like The Lightning* and the subsequent books in the *Terra Ignota* quartet look to a far future where national borders have been dismantled, in a radically restructured society where belonging is defined not by blood or geography but by practices of choice. Here small self-created households draw borders around themselves, and Palmer reworks the trope of the alien visitor to explore existential and moral questions regarding the structure of society. As Palmer uses the domestic scale of the border to explore the consolidation of power and the boundaries of belonging, *Mindscape* by Andrea Hairston is set on a future Earth where barriers of deadly radiation have descended without apparent cause to wind like ribbons around the globe. These new border zones defy western-scientific comprehension, and Hairston uses the physical presence of this other-worldly technology to explore the boundaries that are drawn around ways of knowing and states of being.

1 Jane Rendell, 'The Setting and the Social Condenser: Transitional Objects in Architecture and Psychoanalysis' in *Reading Architecture and Culture*, ed. by Adam Sharr (Routledge, 2012), pp. 136–50 (p. 136) <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203721193-20>.

2 Rendell, 'The Setting and the Social Condenser', p. 136.

3 This article follows Donna Haraway's framing of sf as 'science fiction, science fact, science fantasy, speculative feminism, speculative fabulation, string figures' Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), p. 2.

4 For further discussion of the geo-political border and nation state in sf see: Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, 'Dis-Imagined Communities: Science Fiction and the Future of Nations', *Edging into the Future: Science Fiction and Contemporary Cultural Transformation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), pp. 217–37. For further discussion of the border wall in utopian and dystopian world building, see: Meagan Kathleen Smith, 'Science Fiction at the Border' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2022); Elsa Dominique Bouet, 'Hitting the Wall : Dystopian Metaphors of Ideology in Science Fiction' (unpublished doctoral thesis, The University of Edinburgh, 2013).

In this way each of these books considers the border as a spatial and social device, operating at the global scale but enacted at the level of intense individual experience. For Imre Szeman, sf's capacity to simultaneously address the breathtakingly vast and the deeply personal makes it a genre best placed to address climate emergency and 'shake us out of our faith in surplus.'[5] I would argue that this same capacity allows these fictions to address the myriad scales of spatial and temporal borders and provoke reflection within a reader. Darko Suvin defines science-fiction as the literature of 'cognitive estrangement,' texts which transport the reader to worlds of radical strangeness to offer a transformative glance back at the familiar. As Suvin describes, in these fictions 'the mirror is a crucible'; through it we bear witness to worlds remade.[6]

This imaginative reconstitution of reality is celebrated by sf scholars and activists such as Walidah Imarisha who argues that these fictions can provide a site to 'dream as ourselves', where we might liberate the imagination and gather the resolve to sculpt reality.[7] I believe that sf is a similarly critical site for the spatial disciplines and all those intimately involved in the imagining new built worlds into being. In these selected novels the sf devices of the portal, the alien being, and the otherworldly technology, are refashioned to make manifest social, existential and epistemological acts of bordering. They expose the constructed-ness of systems of enclosure and exclusion, and present the possibility that they could be imagined and made otherwise.

In this way the act of reading sf is both a reflective and creative process. As Kathleen Spencer delineates, each text presents its reader with fragmentary glimpses into another world, from which we must imaginatively construct a whole 'stretching beyond the terms we have been given'.[8] As I read these fictions I collage in my lived experiences, memories and other imaginings to fill the gaps. It is a deeply personal act which allows me to view the fragments of my own life in the context of fresh strangeness.

These processes of estrangement and critical reflection also echo the way in which Rendell describes interdisciplinary practice, which operates 'at the edge and in between disciplines'.[9] As worlds entirely elsewhere these fictions provide space to resist disciplinary boundaries. Accordingly, I find myself considering these fictions alongside and through works of art and spatial theory which address the spatial and social construction of thresholds and borders, drawing on references and experiences from my life as an architect and lecturer in representation. This paper manifests a movement between and across disciplines, practices, and imagined worlds. Here I find a joyful transgression of borders, a refusal to settle, an inhabitation of the space in-between.

5 Imre Szeman, 'Literature and Energy Futures', *PMLA*, 126.2 (2011), pp. 323–25 (p. 325).

6 While Suvin's definition was developed in order to establish a boundary around science fiction in relation to other genre fictions, I find this particular quality in all the sf texts discussed in this paper. Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (Yale University Press, 1979), p. 5.

7 Walidah Imarisha, 'Introduction', in *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements*, ed. by adrienne maree brown and Walidah Imarisha (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2015), pp. 3–5 (p. 5).

8 Kathleen L. Spencer, '"The Red Sun Is High, the Blue Low": Towards a Stylistic Description of Science Fiction', *Science Fiction Studies*, 10.1 (1983), pp. 35–49 (p. 45).

9 Jane Rendell, 'Architectural Research and Disciplinarity', *Arq: Architectural Research Quarterly*, 8.2 (2004), pp. 141–47 (p. 145).

EXIT WEST

> it did not reveal what was on the other side, and also did not reflect what was on this side, and so felt equally like a beginning and an end.[10]

The boundary space in *Exit West* is contained within the thickness of a doorframe. This doorway in particular leads from the Greek island of Mykonos to a house in West London, dissolving the intervening time and space. It is one of many doorways that have changed, no longer leading into the next room but folding space to create a connection between here and there without the passage between. Their destinations are unknown; welcome and relative safety cannot be guaranteed. By collapsing distance, the doorways have removed the risk of the journey but not the peril of arrival or the loss of departure.

In Alicja Kwade's installation *WeltenLinie* (WorldLine) large black frames outline the view of a series of objects including a polished stone, a tree trunk, and a rock.[11] Yet as you move and the objects hit the edge of the frame they appear to be transformed; the polished stone is reflected covered in green glaze, the tree truck is stripped of its bark, and the rock shimmers with gilding. The doorways of *Exit West* prompt me to recall my own experience of this piece, to look past the careful use of double-sided mirrors and meticulous alignments, to read these frames as doorways to elsewhere. As they move across the bounding line of the frame each object is subtly altered and my own perception of its fixity is stripped away. These objects are revealed to have always existed in a state of potential change; to echo Spencer, they stretch beyond the terms we had been given. I had understood the doorway as a boundary of distinction between two identifiable places or conditions, but through *Exit West* and *WeltenLinie* I come to apprehend the threshold as a transformative space, even if only the thickness of a frame or a shadow.

> It seemed the more empty a space in the city the more it attracted [...] local newspapers referring to the area as the worst of the black holes in the fabric of the nation.[12]

The shadow cast by the half open door leaf in *Exit West* is transformed into a sliver of darkness that folds space. They are cracks through which the world can seep in. But the transformative potential of these doorways is dependent on their location and use. Those which lead into uninhabited or unused rooms seem most inclined to change, and so the security of the land-banked homes of London, left vacant to accumulate wealth, are shattered by a thousand hairline fractures.

For Sophie Lewis the doorway, like the national border, can be understood as a boundary technology. Through the consideration of water management, Lewis develops an attentiveness to 'borders, laws, doors, pipes, bowls, boats, baths, flood-barriers, and scalpels' as threshold mechanisms which 'hold, release and manage,' and are deployed with specific political, social, and environmental intent.[13] These boundary technologies operate across scales shaping the mutual construction of global and domestic life. Where these mechanisms perpetuate segregation and exclusion Lewis calls us to create 'desired or needful openings' which are 'conducive to flourishing' allowing movement across and in-between.[14] Read together, Lewis' list and the doorways of *Exit West* demand that I acknowledge everyday boundaries, to confront the damage done by mundane acts of exclusion. Their domestic scale draws attention to the threshold mechanisms which perpetuate iniquitous access to shelter, the legal mechanisms of land ownership, property speculation, and the creation of isolated enclaves of privilege within urban space. Here, the fictional makes palpable the everyday violence of the front door.

10 Mohsin Hamid, *Exit West* (London: Penguin, 2017) p. 103.

11 Alicja Kwade, *WeltenLini*e, 2020, powder coated steel, bronze patinated, concrete, oak, pine wood, petrified wood, corten steel, sandstone, stone, granite, marble, wood. Alicja Kwade and National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, <https://alicjakwade.com/works/weltenlinie>.

12 Hamid, *Exit West*, p. 126.

13 Sophie Lewis, *Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism against Family* (London: Verso Books, 2019), p. 166.

14 Lewis, *Full Surrogacy Now*, p. 167.

> Soon there was a vanload more of them, in full riot gear [...] barricades and checkpoints were manned by armed government forces.[15]

While the doorways in *Exit West* collapse distance, the idea of the national border remains and the spaces of arrival are monitored and secured with the animosity of all border policing. In this way the border of the nation state is simply displaced, and while this speaks to the resilience of exclusionary practices, this relocation is still transformative. The current physical distance between everyday life in London and the brutality enacted in detention centres or at immigration checkpoints means that these experiences can be held at an intellectual and emotional remove. But this border blossoms in terraced streets crossed with police cordons and darkened by power blackouts. It strips the comfort of distance and refutes any attempts to relegate this violence to the periphery.

This relocation of border transforms a home into a liminal space, what Léopold Lambert describes as being within the thickness of the boundary line, 'a space that has no geometrical, and therefore no legal, existence.'[16] Those who occupy this place are no-where, stripped of the legal rights which accompany presence. But this condition is not ubiquitous. Rather, as Lambert and Lewis note, it is the determined result of applied systems whose foundations range from callous ambivalence to explicit racism, and through them I am forced to confront my role as an 'implicated subject'.[17] As Amanda Lagji discusses, while the doors in *Exit West* facilitate mobility the temporal dimensions of migration persist where people are held in transit, exacerbating existing iniquitous power dynamics.[18] Like the immigration raids which shatter the illusory safety of suburban streets the appearance of these doorways heightens the apparent immediacy of acts of bordering, relocating the border from the edge of the nation and the edge of consciousness, to the centre of London and the heart-land of the home.

> here they were penned in together, and being penned in made them into a grouping, a group.[19]

This particular redrawn border territory in *Exit West*, between the shadow of the doorway and the edge of the police cordon, is swiftly inhabited by those who step through. They are a group borne of situation - of this specific location and of their position within it. This collective identity is forced upon them by police presence which flattens and dismisses any distinctions of identity or kinship. It is an act of enclosure which is a source of terror for those held inside. But it also provides the common ground of a shared situation, a place from which to offer comfort and solidarity.

As described by Lewis and Lambert, the dehumanising mechanisms of the border are based on definitions of identity generated by those who control its edges. This is echoed by Stavros Stavrides who considers the city as a series of identity enclaves, where access to each demarcated domain is predicated on an individual's characteristics.[20] Stavrides suggests that in-between spaces might provide 'spaces of encounter between identities,' from which acts of solidarity become possible.[21] While the creation of collective identity in *Exit West* is forcibly applied, Josephine Carter describes how these border crossings and acts of assembly also establish the 'possibility for a form of community that facilitates ethical responsibility for others', one which imagines the 'infinite, immeasurable and unpredictable possibilities for relating to others.'[22] Through *Exit West* I am able to understand this enclosure as a vicious act of exclusion while also practicing the radical hope that it can be remade by those within as a space of encounter.

> she did not need to fear that her views could not be comprehended, for her English was like theirs, one among many.[23]

15 Hamid, *Exit West*, p. 145.

16 Léopold Lambert, 'The Politics of Narrowness: When Walls Tighten on Bodies', *The Avery Review*, 11, 2015 <https://averyreview.com/issues/11/the-politics-of-narrowness-when-walls-tighten-on-bodies> [accessed 8 October 2022].

17 Stefano Bellin, 'Disorienting Empathy: Reimagining the Global Border Regime through Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*', *Literature Compass*, 19.12 (2022), e12694.

18 Amanda Lagji, 'Waiting in Motion: Mapping Postcolonial Fiction, New Mobilities, and Migration through Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*', *Mobilities*, 14.2 (2019), pp. 218–32 (p. 219).

19 Hamid, *Exit West*, p. 128.

20 Stavros Stavrides, *Towards the City of Thresholds* (Brooklyn: Common Notions, 2019).

21 Stavrides, *Towards*, p. 39.

22 Josephine Carter, 'How Far Are We Prepared to Go? Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* and the Refuge Crisis', *Textual Practice*, 35.4 (2021), pp. 619–38 (p. 636).

23 Hamid, *Exit West*, p. 143.

In *Exit West* the physical border of the police cordon is replicated in blocked Wi-Fi and cut power lines which curtail digital freedom.[24] The brutality of this, and all forms of incarceration, cannot be understated. To those who surround them, the occupants are an undifferentiated group suspended in transition. But within the house this flattening of self and space is resisted, and the boundary line unfolds and expands. The doorways each contain untold possibilities of connection with all else-wheres and with those who might step through them.

These doorways break open the lines which delineate the edges of place, continually disrupting the mechanisms of the boundary drawing as detailed by Lewis, Lambert and Stavrides. This fiction exposes how political and national borders are already vulnerable, contingent on systems of control that must be continually enacted, and that I am complicit in reinforcing and reperforming. As well as recognising my role in these global systems of spatial control, I am also made aware of smaller ways in which I perpetuate practices of boundary delineation through the drawing conventions of architectural representation, privileging the depiction of enclosure rather than demonstrating connection. In an effort to break open these enclosures of practice I turn to Do Ho Suh's *My Home/s - Hubs*, a large-scale installation made of translucent fabric where the entrance halls of each of his homes are replicated at full scale in brightly coloured cloth, joyful and meticulous.[25] It is a literal stitching together of these in-between spaces which tie together the public street and the private home. Each hallway led to a home that the artist occupied, and so the experience of walking through them retraces a deeply personal spatial history. As an installation it collapses lived time and space, revelling in the transformative threshold state of in-between spaces. It is a testament to an understanding of space which is always in relation, where, like the doorways of *Exit West*, both memory and possibility of connection are potently present.

TOO LIKE THE LIGHTNING

> The bottom was choked with wildflowers and seed-heavy grasses, tousled by the foraging of countless birds...[26]

This boundary space in *Too Like the Lightning* is an unremarkable gully; overgrown and filled with wildflowers, a recess cut into the land which surrounds a small community. It acts as a dividing line separating this bash'house, which is both collective home and workplace, from those of other affinity groups. This boundary is a demarcation of a conscious choice of belonging – an enclosure which establishes the 'us' of constructed kinship.

Too Like the Lightning depicts a future where multiple structures of social identity have been deconstructed or reframed as entirely private including gender, religion, and nationality. In their place are communities of choice, creating what Lee Konstantinou describes as a 'postgeographic form of global governance.'[27] But these new social groups have coalesced into entrenched structures of power, informing acceptable behaviour, and delineating the scope of possibility for their members. When reflecting on this social construction of identity I am drawn to Ilya Kabakov's *Labyrinth (My Mother's Album)*.[28] This work is a large-scale installation comprising a series of corridors which resemble the interior of a Soviet-era housing block. The turns in these corridors elicit anticipation while they also constrain the viewer in a thwarted state of transition, reflecting life within a society founded on an anticipated future both already realised and perpetually deferred. Recalled alongside *Too Like the Lightning*, this work allows me to understand the mutual construction of domestic space and social intent. Here domestic threshold spaces act as the manifestation of identity; they are the defining premises for everyday life, and the outlines of future possibility.

24 For discussion of the role of digital technologies as 'portals' within *Exit West*, see: Michael Perfect, '"Black Holes in the Fabric of the Nation": Refugees in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 23.2 (2019), pp. 187–201.

25 Do Ho Suh, *My Home/s – Hubs*, 2016, polyester fabric on stainless steel pipes. Do Ho Suh, Lehmann Maupin, New York and Hong Kong, and Victoria Miro, London, <https://www.victoria-miro.com/exhibitions/501/>.

26 Ada Palmer, *Too Like the Lightning*, (London: Head of Zeus, 2017) p. 3.

27 Lee Konstantinou, 'Post-American Speculations', *American Literary History*, 35.1 (2023), pp. 290–304 (p. 297).

28 Ilya Kabakov, *Labyrinth (My Mother's Album)*, 1990, wooden construction, 9 doors, wooden ceiling props, 24 light bulbs, detritus, audio and 76 works on paper, photographs, ink and printed papers. Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, and Tate, London, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/kabakov-labyrinth-my-mothers-album-t07923>.

> separated this row of bash'houses from the next, like a deep, dry moat...[29]

This gully may be filled with wildflowers and softened by grass into gentle undulations, but it still resembles a moat. It is a trench around a home, a spatial echo of histories of defensive enclosure. Like the wider society of the novel, it speaks both of gentle interconnection and the violent impulses of spatial belonging.

These references to historical forms are deliberately deployed by Palmer who discusses the restructuring of the household in this novel as simply another transformation of the domestic, which has never had a fixed historical form.[30] Following the slippages of corridor and gully evoked by *Labyrinth*, I turn to the work of Robin Evans, who details the historical development of the domestic corridor as a product and manifestation of social division. In the UK corridors were devised to serve isolated rooms, what Evans describes as 'individual compartments in which to preserve the self from others,' to defend occupants from distraction by removing the possibility of incidental encounter.[31] A spatial barrier between the domains of men and those of women and children, between servant and served, they are a manifestation of class and gender segregation. While the gully around the bash'house is an exaggeration of such separation, reading *Too Like the Lightning* alongside the work of Evans allows me to trace between history and imagined future, bringing the lived implications of this original intention to isolate into the present. I am driven to examine my own replication of these border lines that were drawn to segregate and enclose, the patterns of movement I retrace, allowing them to shape and structure behaviour.

> The high draw-bridge like walkway which led to the main door of the shimmering glass bash'house [...] line the entrance hall with the traditional relics of triumphs...[32]

A bridge crosses this moat. It is a garden path elevated above the sunken wildflower garden and the only tendril of connection traversing the threshold. It leads to a home whose occupants orient their lives around individual excellence, connected through a hallway which evidences their own worth. To move across and through these spaces is to be made vulnerable, to be confronted by the achievements of others, to be judged within this space of proclaimed value.

This passageway of bridge and hall constructs spatial hierarchy by mediating access to the rooms beyond as delineated by Evans. But it also directs and controls the perception of space and the place of an individual within it. Prior to domestic use, the corridor was originally deployed in military barracks, prisons, and asylums. As described by Mark Jarzombek, these institutions aspire to subsume the individual, with 'every inch focusing on the task of bringing man, building, and nation into a single optic.'[33] Here the corridor is a space of enforcement and surveillance, leading to ranked doors which permit no deviation from the logic of the whole. This historical reading might seem incongruous with the ideas of choice which permeate *Too Like the Lightning*, but the dominating constructs of the bridge and hall reflect how these new social groups have coalesced into institutions, and gestures towards the presence of 'incompletely repressed problems' like gender, class and religion which continue to exert structuring social influence.[34] Through *Labyrinth*, and Evans and Jarzombek's histories of the corridor, these domestic boundary spaces speak to me as manifestations of control which have become so every-day as to be invisible. They ask me to redress the legacies of segregation within domestic space, and rail against institutional architectures which dictate my place within the world.

29 Palmer, *Too Like the Lightning*, p. 3.

30 Ada Palmer, 'From Ada's AMA: Terra Ignota, Bash'es & Hives' <https://www.exurbe.com/from-adas-ama-terra-ignota-bashes-hives/> [accessed 15 September 2023].

31 Robin Evans, 'Figures, Doors and Passages', in *Translations from Drawing to Building* (MIT Press, 1997), pp. 55–91 (p. 74).

32 Palmer, *Too Like the Lightning*, p. 29.

33 Mark Jarzombek, 'Corridor Spaces', *Critical Inquiry*, 36.4 (2010), pp. 728–70 (p. 751); see also: Stephan Trüby, *Elements of Architecture: Corridor* (Marsilio, 2014).

34 Rebecca Ariel Porte and Benjamin Aldes Wurgaft, 'Rockets and Voltaire: A Dialogue on Ada Palmer's "Terra Ignota"', *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 2022 <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/rockets-and-voltaire-a-dialogue-on-ada-palmers-terra-ignota/> [accessed 15 September 2023].

> a cheerful cave, walled with foam of festive colors [...] Inside the cave is all clutter, the choicest treasures gathered from the trash of which Bridger has first pick.[35]

A child, Bridger, lives in the gully. They are unobserved in the undergrowth, hidden here by the adults who care for them. Nestled up against the bash' wall they are concealed and held close. This trench which marks the boundary of the bash' is neither part of the household nor part of the wider world. Between public and private, they are safe in the space between.

This life on the threshold exists outside the rules of the bash' or the world beyond, and these structures of power are challenged by the inhabitant of the in-between. This playfully echoes the complex examination of borderlands by Gloria Anzaldúa.[36] In her nuanced tracing of the Mexico/US border and the complexities of history, tradition, belonging and identity woven through and into those places, Anzaldúa describes the borderlands as the place where worlds converge to create a third country which extends within the self. In place of simple binaries, the borderlands attest to the complexities of lived experience, refuting segregationist delineation by reshaping space and self. Read in this light, Bridger's presence serves as a somewhat utopian retelling of the borderlands. While, as Evans and Jarzombek discuss, the legacies of the corridors shape behaviour, the borderland creates the space of its own making. As Bridger selects items to treasure, they reconstitute the materials of the world.

> the transformation, as real as the page before you, impossible and undeniable.[37]

But Bridger is not here out of choice. As their name might suggest they have a fantastical ability to bridge between the imagined and real. They can imbue reality into the objects of imagination, turning a drawing into the object it depicts, blurring the realities of interior story and external world. That this radical power is held by a child makes both vulnerable to exploitation, and so they are hidden by their caregivers in this gully, this bridging space. Between and thus outside of controlled space, they exist outside of the limits of possibility.

While Bridger's ability is science fictional in its potency, it reflects the ways in which our worlds are continually made and remade. In recognising this, I must also acknowledge the structures of control which I reinscribe in design projects and confront the borders of my own making. As I think through the implications of uncritical replication of enclosure, I recall Hayv Kahraman's *Bab el Sheikh*.[38] In this work, multiple semi-translucent figures are overlaid onto the plan of a courtyard house. They drift across the walls of rooms but are pressed up against the edges of the courtyard, held in place by the cultural rules of gender, constrained by the corridor. The figures bend and twist themselves to fit, but they also exuberantly multiply in these hidden spaces, and their sprawling bodies claim and remake the site of their confinement. As Evans and Jarzombek document, the histories of the corridor linger in each redeployment of these spatial devices, but as Anzaldúa attests the lived reality of the borderlands is a much more complex construction of space and self. Reading *Too Like* across and between these artworks and spatial theory, I question where I have allowed spatial divisions to delineate the boundaries of what I imagine to be possible, and how much I must learn from 'those who cross over, pass over or go through the confines of the normal.'[39] Bridger's wilful reshaping of reality from within the borderland reminds me that the world is continually under construction, and that which has been made can be remade otherwise.

35 Palmer, *Too Like the Lightning*, p. 208.

36 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012).

37 Palmer, *Too Like the Lightning*, p. 6.

38 Hayv Kahraman, *Bab El Sheikh*, 2013, oil on modular panel, <https://hayvkahraman.com/project/let-the-guest-be-the-master/>.

39 Palmer, *Too Like the Lightning*, p. 3.

MINDSCAPE

> Breaking apart land and sea, night and day, yesterday and every other tomorrow…[40]

The boundary spaces of *Mindscape* are Barriers, seams of energy which materialised to encircle the globe in threads of the unknown. Almost impossible to traverse, they have come to replace the nation states they cut across, marking out boundaries of life-worlds for those contained within. They have spawned the creation of new hybrid cultural identities, new patterns of scientific understanding, language and music, but also new forms of social segregation forged from the legacies of systemic oppression.

By impeding movement these Barriers reshape the lives and cultures of those contained within, now grouped together in unanticipated combinations. This forced intimacy draws me to consider the Barrier alongside the boundary space in Marina Abramović and Ulay's *Imponderabilia*.[41] This performance artwork is sited in the doorway to a gallery, inhabited by two naked people. Passing through it requires turning to face them, squeezing between them, and brushing close. It dismantles the illusory detachment of the viewer to recognise the relationships established by works of art to other bodies and life worlds. As Hairston describes in relation to dancing and acting, 'creating meaning from experiences in the world always involves a performance, a moment of embodied exchange.'[42] Thinking through *Imponderabilia* alongside *Mindscape* is an opportunity to reflect on the mutual construction of physical distance and bodily self, which are replicated at scale in *Mindscape* as cultures are radically reshaped by the Barriers, required to remake themselves relations of proximity and intimacy.

> The fluid, milky veil hanging across the horizon looked unusually dull in the pre-dawn light [...] A black crystal corridor in the Barrier yawned before him.[43]

The Barrier in *Mindscape* is a zone, a swathe of landscape which has been rendered uninhabitable. But it is occasionally split by channels where the swirling mists temporarily part to allow safe passage. Where they can be predicted the seasonal corridors are swiftly populated by caravan crossings. Like all migrations, these are movements through the unknown. The looming Barrier either side makes manifest the risk of physical harm and exudes existential peril.

As described by John Rieder and Christina Bacchilega, the Barriers are 'the imposition of a new frontier […] dividing what was from what is and can be,' forcing these new zones to 'redefine themselves in relation both to one another and to their lost pasts and possible futures.'[44] These are the tenuous threads of connection to the lost past of cultural and kinship groups now split apart, and the sites of interchange which shape possible futures. For Homi Bhabha it is in the interstitial spaces that the intersubjective and collective can emerge, as 'terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood and communal representations that generate new signs of cultural difference and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation.'[45] These are sites between polarities, between fixed identification, where difference can be entertained and the possibility of cultural hybridity opened up. In *Mindscape*, these are the spaces where both the historic and developing constructions of cultural identity co-exist, and both are placed in a state of hybridity and flux. A space of overlap to think beyond categories of difference.

40 Andrea Hairston, *Mindscape* (Seattle: Aqueduct Press, 2006), p. 10.

41 Marina Abramović and Ulay, *Imponderabilia* , 1977, 52'16", video of performance at Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna di Bologna. LIMA, <https://www.li-ma.nl/lima/catalogue/art/ulay-marina-abramovic/imponderabilia/7094>.

42 Andrea Hairston, 'Disappearing Natives: The Colonized Body Is Monstrous', *Extrapolation*, 54.3 (2013), pp. 257–63 (p. 257).

43 Hairston, *Mindscape*, p. 290.

44 John Rieder and Cristina Bacchilega, 'History and Its Others in Afrofuturism', *Iperstoria*, 8, 2016, p. 18.

45 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 2.

> the Barrier look like it swallow black and blue tornadoes [...] somethin' sides me be under my skin, in my head.[46]

The material of the Barrier is a substance which flows and shifts, extending out tendrils which slide across the skin of those who stray too close. Touching the Barrier means risking burns, scarring, and radiation sickness. Those who stray into its field appear to burn out of this plane of existence, occasionally glimpsed again as shadows within its depths, lingering in the shifting energy patterns. As well as dividing the mundane places of geography the Barrier is a threshold between the realms of body and spirit, both enclosure and opening, wall and doorway.

While *Imponderabilia* and the work of Bhabha offer me ways to consider the relational, temporal and cultural transformations provoked by the Barrier, these spaces are also a threshold for metaphysical transformation. They provide a glimpse into the unfathomably other which requires me to address states of being beyond the tangible. It is a challenge to my architectural understandings of the world, and in response I grasp for the resolutely spatial reflections of architect Aldo Van Eyck. He argues that doorways are the manifestation of barriers already present within society, their shallow depths the product of architects too poor in spirit to imagine a world otherwise. In their place, Van Eyck calls me to celebrate and extend the threshold, to 'persuade it to loop into […] an articulated in-between realm.'[47] Extended into a realm, the mundane doorway is a place for departure and arrival, where multiple states are held in-between. By considering the work of Bhabha, Van Eyck and *Imponderabilia* through *Mindscape* I am able to attend to the multifarious subtle and powerful ways that the threshold operates as a site of transformation.

> It's as if I glimpse worlds, universes, dimensions beyond our own, different rules, different languages, different mindscapes.[48]

The Barrier cannot be measured using techno-scientific methods, but can be interacted with by the Vermittler. These are individuals who have been remade by the Barrier, altered through proximity to its radiation. Each of them draws upon their own heritages of understanding to channel communication; some reach out through dance and song while others enact knowledge gained through sand mandalas and medicine bags. The edges of the Barrier represent the limits of Western knowledge systems, a threshold to understanding beyond that which is claimed as known.

The Barrier's tangible presence acts upon the bodily self, the social group, the cultural construct, while the effect of its radiation establishes it as an existential and epistemological edge condition. In all these readings, it is a presence which bridges the known and the unknown. Grace Dillon describes how this serves to recognise 'more than Eurowestern ways of thinking' through the depiction of 'conjuration as science.'[49] This is what Hairston refers to throughout her work as a 'Spectral Aesthetic from a polyrhythmic perspective,' interested more in relational balance than diametrical binaries.[50] The Barrier in *Mindscape* demands a move beyond fixed frames of knowledge, into the complex and relational. In his analysis of the corridors as depicted in genre fiction Roger Luckhurst notes that these spaces are frequently used to establish a state of suspense and to engender the subtle uneasiness of the interstitial.[51] The Barrier, as both boundary and corridor is fundamentally unsettling, a space of suspense which holds its inhabitants between places, outside of the reassurances of the quantifiable. It threatens and promises encounters with the unknown.

46 Hairston, *Mindscape*, p. 354.

47 Aldo Van Eyck, 'Team 10 Primer 1953-62', ed. by Allison Smithson, *Ekistics*, 15.91 (1963), pp. 349–60 (p. 360).

48 Hairston, *Mindscape*, p. 556.

49 Grace L. Dillon, 'Haint Stories Rooted in Conjure Science: Indigenous Scientific Literacies in Andrea Hairston's Redwood and Wildfire', *Black and Brown Planets,* 2014, pp. 101–16 (p. 104).

50 Andrea Hairston, 'I Wanna Be Great!: How to Rescue the Spirit in the Wasteland of Fame', in *Upstaging Big Daddy: Directing Theater as If Gender and Race Matter*, ed. by Ellen Donkin and Susan Clement (University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp. 235–52 (p. 237).

51 Roger Luckhurst, *Corridors: Passages of Modernity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2019).

> think of me at the center of the Barrier mindscape, translating truth, interpreting on being for another, bridging realities.[52]

The Vermittler ability to resonate with the Barrier in patterns of mutual influence is due in part to the radiation which has wrought genetic changes in them. While the Barrier can act as a point of connection, a bridge to other worlds and states of being, it requires the creation of radically new hybrid selves. Those who have been remade belong to both sides of the divide and neither, able to access this place between which in turn connects them to all places. This is a choice to engage with the possibilities contained between and beyond known worlds, but it requires them to relinquish the people they once were, to commit to being remade by that which they encounter.

In *Mindscape* the encounters with borderlands are made viscerally potent. The science-fictional device of the Barrier retells the implications of geographical acts of bordering which cut across landscapes in disregard of more than human networks and connections, and echoes the ongoing violence of colonial legacies which split apart kinship groups and cultures, or displace and divide on the basis of religion or race. But through the Vertmiller the border as edge is unpicked and recast as a threshold. This is presented as an act of will which recognises that in order to remake the world we also remake ourselves. Read alongside and through these works of art and theory, I come to see this as an invitation to celebrate the threshold as an in-between state operating across scales of influence, through bodily encounter, social hybridity, spatial design, and the existential unknown. It is an invitation I feel echoed in Dorothea Tanning's *Birthday* in which doorways lead onwards to further thresholds of strangeness.[53] In this painting, the first door is held open by the artist's self-portrait, revealing further partially opened doorways beyond. It is a gesture which models the choice to enter into spaces which are hidden, revealed and transformed all at once. Here there are myriad places in between nested within one another and extending ever further, to be found within the self, to be encountered and made with others.

THRESHOLD CONDITIONS

Three years have passed since I started writing this piece, and I no longer live in the flat with the porch steps, but it is summer again. So, I sit with my back pressed against the sun-warmed wood of the door and my feet curled over the tiles of the front path, inhabiting the thickness of the boundary. In her writing on the 'Matter of Matter', Jennifer Bloomer describes sitting within the poché of an ancient castle as being swallowed by the wall. For Bloomer architectural representations are 'longing marks' and the simple delineations which reduce the potent materiality of the wall to two straight parallel lines are either a subjugation or denial of the 'gravid object.'[54] She asks me to 'go between the lines, to the heart of the matter, in the belly of the wall,' to recognise the boundary as space, thick and fecund.[55] As I read these words I feel a shifting pulse within my own belly. I am currently pregnant, a new life being written within the lines of myself, creating a space in-between where I had previously known only the illusion of inviolate self. I recall a conversation with a friend and colleague who spoke about being pregnant as the bodily reproof of singular self-hood, this time when I and we are indistinguishable in the messy materiality of flesh.[56] It is an intimate dissolution of individuality rendered momentarily palpable in the wet heat of blood, but it also speaks to the foundational truth of inter-relation. Even as this warm summer breeze skims my porous skin and lifts the sweat of my grown self, I am all blurred edges and intertwined networks, boundaries which serve to delineate only the swollen possibilities of the space between the lines. I linger here a little longer, remade within the threshold.

52 Hairston, *Mindscape*, p. 553.

53 Dorothea Tanning, *Birthday*, 1942, oil on canvas. Philadelphia Museum of Art, <https://philamuseum.org/collection/object/93232>.

54 Jennifer Bloomer, 'The Matter of Matter: A Longing for Gravity', in *Sex of Architecture*, ed. by Diana Agrest, Patricia Conway, and Kanes Weisman Leslie (Harry N. Abrams, 1996), p. 161, p. 163.

55 Bloomer, 'The Matter of Matter', p. 163.

56 Thank you to Katy Beinart for this exchange.

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To the communities I am privileged to overlap with: London Science Fiction Research Community, and the Beyond Gender Research Collective. To David for introducing me to the work of Hayv Kahraman, to Glyn for recommending Too Like the Lightening, to Katie for introducing me to the work of Sophie Lewis, to Sasha for introducing me to the work of Homi Bhabha, to Sinéad for recommending Exit West, and to Sing for introducing me to the work of Dorothea Tanning. Aspects of this research were initially presented at 'Beyond Borders: Empires, Bodies, Science Fiction', London Science Fiction Research Community Annual Conference, 2020.

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Dr Amy Brookes (formerly Amy Butt) is an architect and lecturer in architecture at the University of Reading with a specialization in architectural representation and communication. Her research explores the way the fictional worlds we construct influence and reflect the world we inhabit, writing about the imaginary in architecture through science fiction literature and film. Recent publications include 'Made up Ground: Architecture, Science Fiction, and the Surface of Imagined Worlds' in *Architecture and Culture*, and 'The Present as Past: Science Fiction and the Museum' in the *Open Library of Humanities* which won the Science Fiction Research Association Innovative Research Award 2022.

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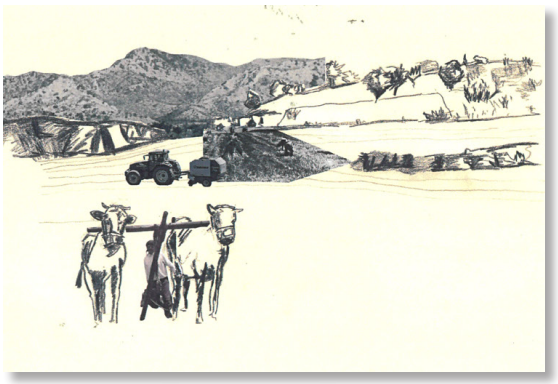
FEMINIST ECOLOGIES IN CYPRUS: EXPLORING A CONTESTED LANDSCAPE

MArch Design Studio Invisible Cities, Sheffield School of Architecture.

Cith Skelcher

Figures 1-5 *The Commoning*, Eleanor Moselle



Yiayia mou,

How I have missed you!

I have booked flights to come and see you in April! I wish you could see your new great grandson but he will be in school by then! Hopefully one day you'll meet. Thank you for sending the box of treats, there's nothing quite like your olives! I hope you're keeping well,

Koraly x

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Yiayia

Issou Street
Larnaca
CYPRUS

marsh is far too low and the reeds are taking over. So who have they brought in to fix it? Us, the cows. Typical.

It's not all bad though. The marsh is getting better again, and they're even building us some nice sheds for the winter.

Hope all's good with you!

The Cyprus Cows xxx

2/2

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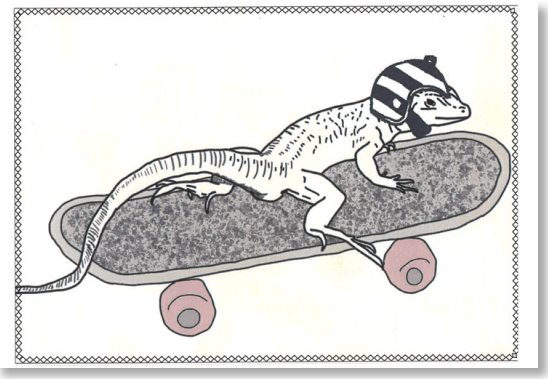

Hey!

How have you been? The sand dunes have been pretty crazy here recently, the weather has been getting more & more extreme, I reckon it's cus of those pesky humans! I can barely find anything to eat these days. :(But the good news is I've got my new helmet and wheels so I can scale across the compacted sand and stand up to the wheels of scary cars.

Love,

Scheiber's Lizard x

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U.K.

Greetings from Pyla!

Currently the only city in Cyprus with Turkish and Greek Cypriots living side by side. Not only side by side but also in buffer zone, creating a unique area of Cyprus. Working along side of Nejdet, we are striving towards a city all of Cyprus can look to!

Your Mayor,

Symon Mytides

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Floor 16
Arts Tower
Western Bank, Sheffield
S10 2TN

> What if the architectural object were revealed to be something closer to a thing among other things, operating necessarily in ecological relation, apt to emerge only to decay.
>
> Hélène Frichot, *Creative Ecologies: Theorising the Practice of Architecture* (Bloomsbury, 2018), 7.

Studio Invisible Cities has this year been exploring the idea that architecture is contingent, and part of a broader and richer ecology. We have been working in the context of Cyprus, a complex and contested island. Situated politically and culturally within the European Union yet geographically located near the states of Turkey, Israel, Lebanon and Egypt, the island has been and remains between west and east, with its strategic location making it subject, over the centuries, to occupation by a number of world powers, including Britain.

Philosophical thinking from the seventeenth century onwards casts nature as an object of study, a blank place to explore and a force to be controlled. During the British colonial period, the media of art, custom and language were used as instruments of 'civilisation' and, as late as the early-twentieth century, the British both violently and insidiously exported their particular brand of 'nature perfected' through literature, landscape painting and garden design to the island of Cyprus, transforming its landscapes.

As Tiffany Kaewen Dang writes: 'As a discipline, landscape not only reflects social and political power relations as a symbolic aesthetic medium; it is itself an instrument and agent of power.'[1] In this context, the studio asks: *How can we begin to intervene within a contested landscape?*

Our starting point was to critique 'landscape as an idea' within our local context in Sheffield. We investigated key landscape types – garden, park, allotment, common – analysing their histories, the versions or visions of nature they espouse, and the politics and methods of survey and design that made them. Drawing on Hélène Frichot's book *Creative Ecologies* we worked together to develop a set of counter methods for reading these landscapes to reveal hidden or latent ecologies.

Figure 6 *Migratory Stories, Postcards from Cyprus,* Invisible Cities Studio: Mia Gaines, Harry R Lord, Eleanor Moselle, Sofia G Sergiou, Jasmine Howarth, Razvan Ivanov, Ella Murrell, Colombine Vaillaud, Shunshun Zhang, Fenella Pakeman, Aisha Khan, Amy Crellin.

1 Tiffany Kaewen Dang, 'Decolonising Landscape', *Landscape Research*, 46:7 (2021): pp. 1004-1016 (p. 1008).

Preparation for our visit to Cyprus in November 2022 continued through a number of conversations, initially with Emma Cheatle, who shared ideas from her emerging research into migratory stories of the un/common local ecologies in Cyprus, introducing us to her collaborator Angela Kyriacou Petrou, from the University of Nicosia. Esra Can and Emre Akbil shared tools and tactics that they had developed through their 'Hands-on Famagusta' project, designed to support practices of commoning as a 'transformative framework in negotiating urban contestations.'[2] The stories and insights shared by our friends and collaborators from the island, both personal and political, challenged us to rethink our flawed assumptions about Cyprus, to engage with its complexities and to reimagine our role as designers.

Building on diverse and collective methodologies of design practice such as mapping, ethnography and creative writing, the students searched out stories of resistance, creativity, joy and ambition. From the wider territories of the British Airforce base RAF Akrotiri to the more compressed landscape of the UN instigated Green Line in Nicosia, students explored and situated themselves within Cyprus' flora and fauna, its borderlands and horizons, its complex histories, infrastructures and institutions.

The initial ambition behind the studio was to explore the notion that 'good architecture' does not begin and end with a building, that informed decision making and design sees architecture as part of a broader and richer ecology. Working within Cyprus' contested landscapes has opened up rich seams of possibility. In seeking to learn, rather than to solve, the projects and approaches that have emerged from the studio have been joyful and diverse.

2 Esra Can, https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/architecture/postgraduate/phd/phd-research-students/esra-can [accessed 28 June 2023].

Hi,

I'm writing to you from the Akrotiri marsh! It's not a bad life here for a Cyprus cow. It's strange thinking about the olden days, humans relied on us for everything! They wouldn't have been able to put food on the table without us. Then the machines came and they had no time for us anymore. But now they've messed up big time - all their fancy machines and big harvesters have caused havoc, the water level in the

1 / 2

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Hi!

We are cats wandering around the 'dead zone', though we don't really have an idea of what 'border' is. We just go around and do whatever we want! We like being close to people, so looking forward to seeing you in Cyprus!

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Hi Susan,

Not moving out of the buffer zone was one of the best decisions I ever made. The street has transformed into a lush garden paradise, my neighbours are quiet and the UN are kind enough to bring my shopping. All that said, I really do miss having you close by - hopefully the boys will stop fighting soon.

love Annie

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Arts Tower
Western Bank
Sheffield
S10 2TN

Hi Susan,

Not moving out of the buffer zone was one of the best decisions I ever made. The street has transformed into a lush garden paradise, my neighbours are quiet and the UN are kind enough to bring my shopping. All that said, I really do miss having you close by - hopefully the boys will stop fighting soon.

love Annie

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We've taken over!

For years these humans restricted us. Now, only though's dressed to look like us come by. It has been almost 50 years since we were last restricted. The things they left have begun to fall apart making our takeover that much easier! All nature is welcome here!

Sincerely,
The Buffer Zone's Flora and Fauna

Rest of Cyprus
ALL Streets
ALL Postcodes
CYPRUS

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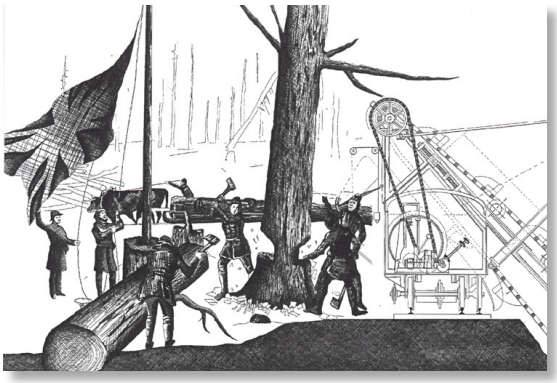

WE HAVE NOT BEEN TREAT WELL. RAPID EXPANSION OF TOWNS, INDUSTRIALISATION, COPPER MINING. INTENSIVE CULTIVATION, HAS CREATED A STRAIN WHICH HAS KNOCKED OUR EQUILIBRIUM OF KILTER.

BRITISH PRESSURE FOR GREATER PRODUCTION HAS LEAD TO THE OVERSEER OF WHAT WE PROVIDE. WE HAVE NOW PASSED OUR 'PEAK' POINT WITH ALL OUR NATURAL RESOURCES. NOW, WE PROTEST. WE WILL NO LONGER GIVE ANYMORE WITHOUT THE PROMISE OF SOMETHING IN RETURN.

THE ENVIRONMENT

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ARTS TOWER
SHEFFIELD
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U.K.

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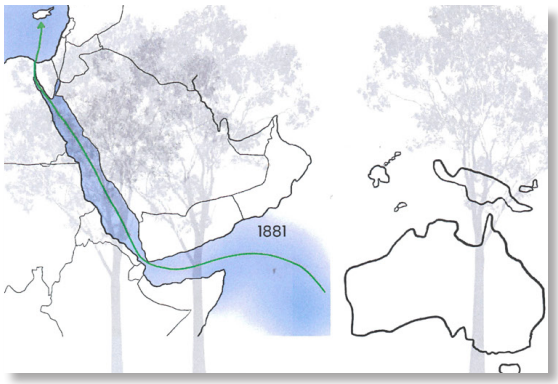

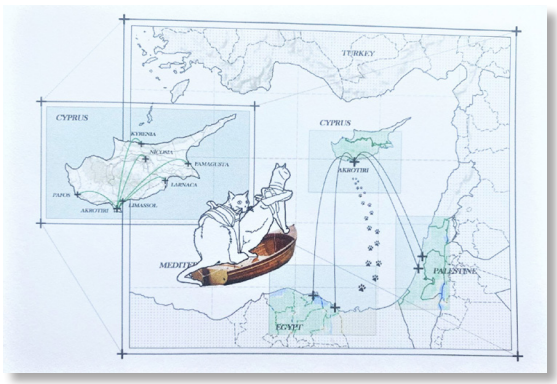

Success!
There are many wetlands for us here! With in a few years we will be as big as ever. The people didn't like us at first but now adore us! Apparently we helped rid this country of a disease! Hope you can come visit one day!

yours Truly,
The Eucalyptus Tree

Eucalyptes Family
East Arnhem Region
Northern Territory 0822
Australia

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Meow ...

Meow ! Meow !

* You might need a cat language translator

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Western Bank
Sheffield
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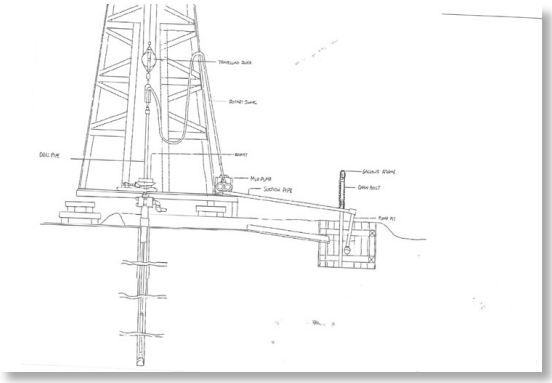

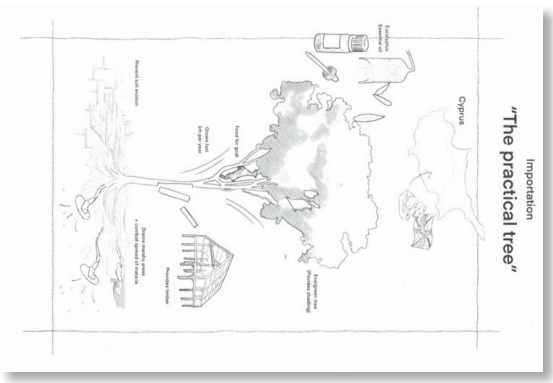

CYPRUS HAS SUFFERED FROM WATER INSECURITY FOR DECADES. WHICH HAS CREATED AN ISLAND OF WATER-PREPPERS HOWEVER, WITHOUT PROPER EDUCATION AND OTHER INDUSTRIALISATION PROJECTS THE WATER IS DISSAPEARING.

UNTIL INDEPENDANCE IN 1960, THOUSANDS OF BOREHOLES WERE DRILLED IN ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY WHICH RESULTED IN DEPLETION OF GROUND WATER RESERVES ESPECIALLY IN THE MAIN WATER-BEARING AREAS DUE TO OVER PUMPING.

This postcard is a Studio Invisible Cities production 2022

Floor 16
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SHEFFIELD
S2G 2TN
U.K

Hey Mom!
I've had new growths again this month! You'd be so proud of me.
I really like it here. Humans keep telling me how nice I smell.
I found my purpose! I help the local humans within economy, all they need are my leaves! I'm also planning to donate my body for them to build new homes once I die.
Your leafie xx

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Hello!
I'm missing my Australian home! I feel guilty that I'm threatening the lives of all these native species and taking their water. People are using my branches to illegally trap songbirds and I can't do anything about it. I don't feel welcome here, please take me back home!
sending love,
Acacia Tree
X

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Sheffield
S10 2TN
U.K.

Γεία σου!

I hope you enjoyed the food on your travels.

Despite the divide of our land, the Cypriots still share a mutual love of me. The recipes have been passed through generations of Greek and Turkish Cypriots, connecting people throughout the island and beyond.

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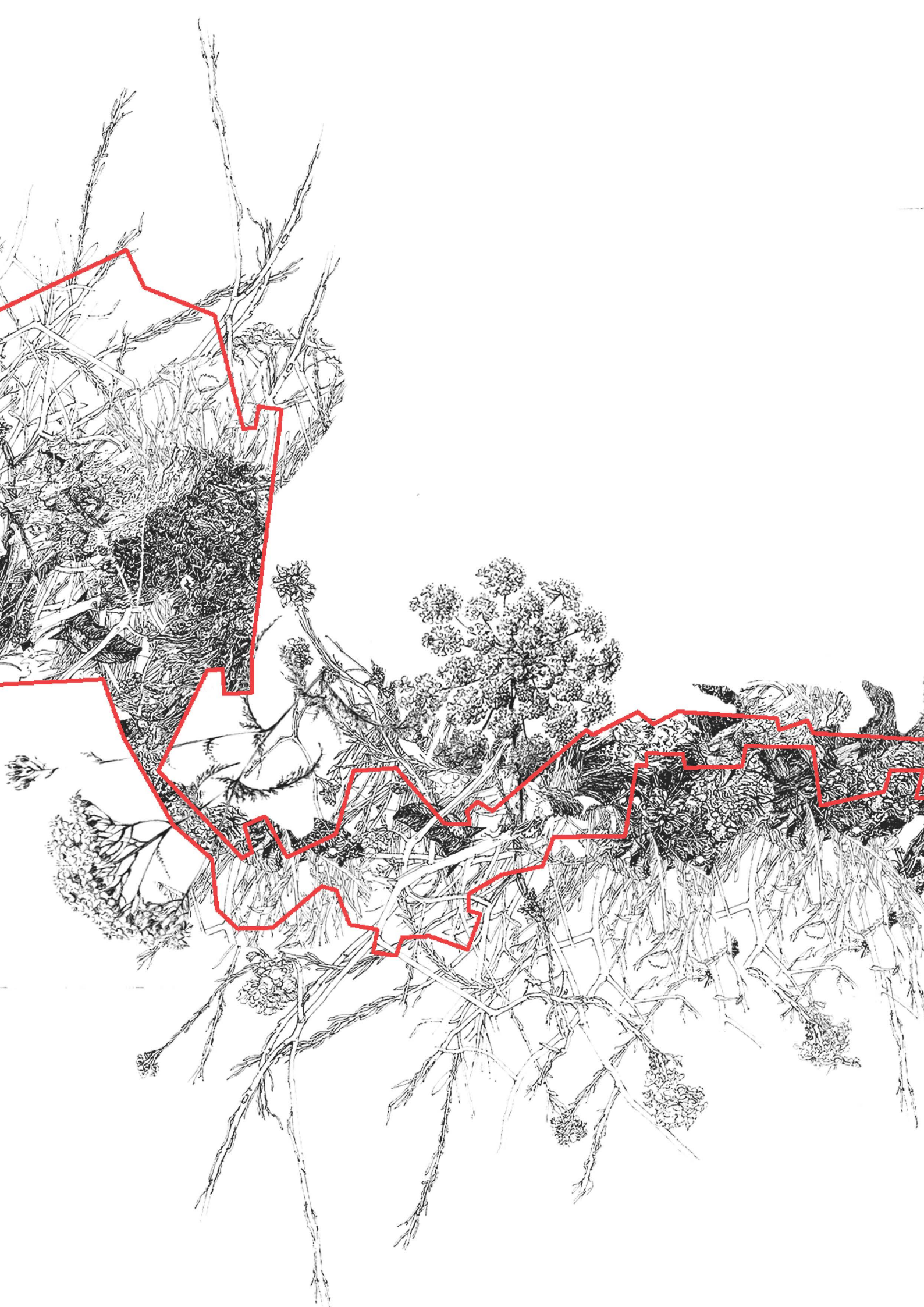
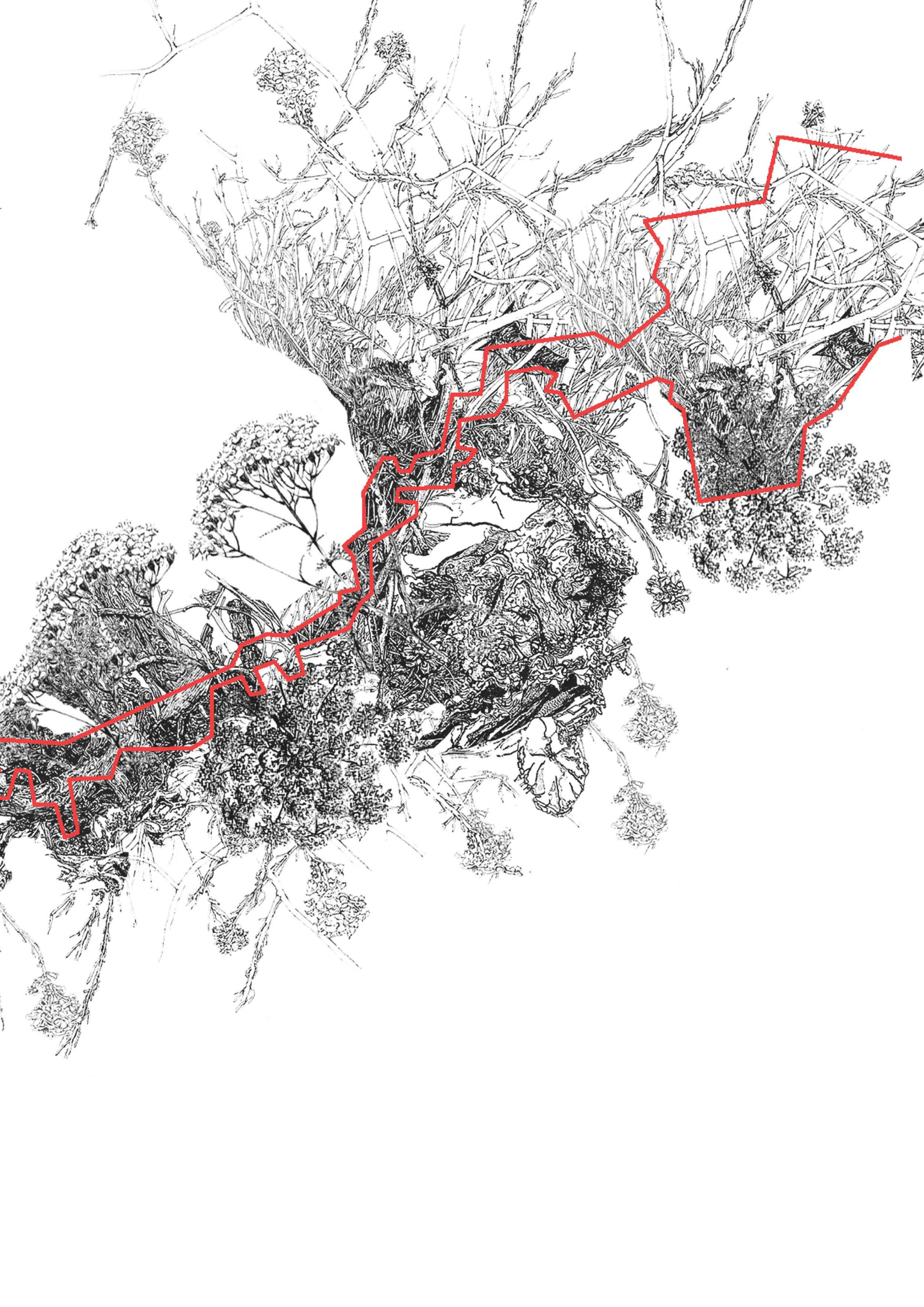
Arts Tower
~~Arts~~ Western Bank
Sheffield
S10 2TN
UK

Figure 7 (left) *Nurseries for Nicosia*, Ella Murrell

Figure 8 (right) *Stitching the Buffer Zone*, Ella Murrell

Figure 9 (next page) *Rewilding the Buffer Zone*, Jasmine Howarth





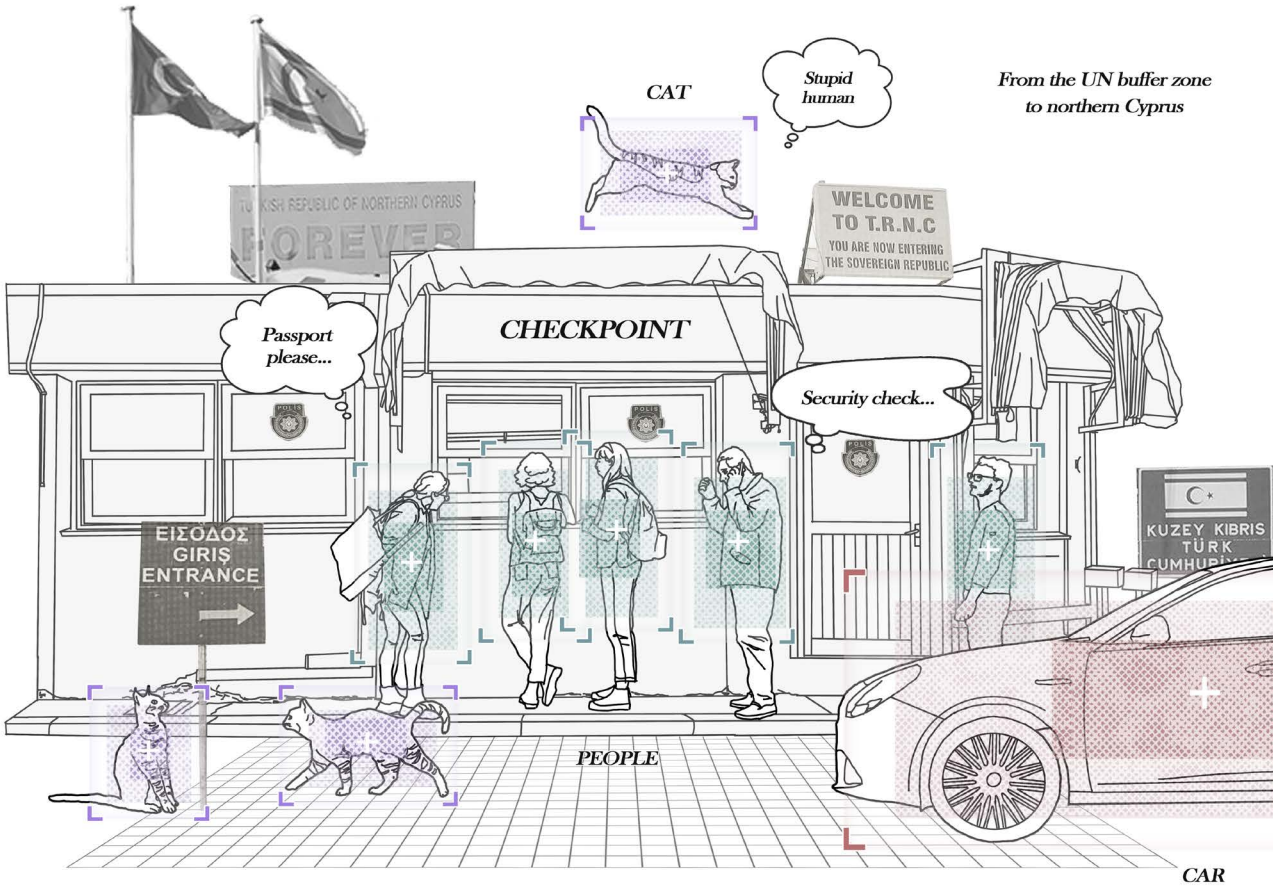


Figure 10 *Crossing the Border,* Shunshun Zhang

Figure 11 *Networks of Care*, Fenella Pakeman

Figure 12 *Mapping Acts of Resistance*, Harry Lord

Figure 13 *The Commoning*, Eleanor Moselle

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CALAIS TOPOGRAPHICS: A PHOTO ESSAY.

Liam Healy

ABSTRACT

The photos in this essay were taken in 2019, three years after the Jungle camp, Calais' largest improvised refugee camp, had been cleared in 2016 and re-landscaped into an eco-park. The images focus on what I see as the 'new topographics' of the Calais landscape. I have borrowed this phrase from William Jenkins' influential New Topographics exhibition from 1975 which radicalised the often romantic view of landscape photography to focus on 'man-altered' landscapes and infrastructures. In this series of photos, the infrastructures are those that participate in upholding the UK border in France.


Aire d'Accueil des Gens du Voyage
Station d'Epuration
Refuge Fourriere Animaux Soins Faune Sauvage
SEVADEC - Centre de Tri Biométhanisation
Déchèterie
Complexe Sportif Courgain Est


CHASSE ET RECHERCHE DE GIBIER INTERDITES

The photos in this essay were taken in 2019, three years after the Jungle camp, Calais' largest improvised refugee camp, had been cleared in 2016 and re-landscaped into an eco-park.[1] The images focus on what I see as the 'new topographics' of the Calais landscape. I have borrowed this phrase from William Jenkins' influential New Topographics exhibition from 1975 which radicalised the often romantic view of landscape photography to focus on 'man-altered' landscapes, for example Bernd and Hiller Becher's photographs of pylons, mining infrastructures and steel mills.[2] In this series of photos, the infrastructures are those that participate in upholding the UK border in France. The 2003 Touquet agreement effectively moved the UK border to France so that border checks could be conducted before crossing the English Channel, effectively precluding many legal routes to asylum because migrants are unable to reach the country in order to initiate a claim. The most recurrent and prominent of the infrastructures to uphold this are the tall, closely knitted white steel fences and concrete walls that surround the port, Eurotunnel station, petrol stations and truck stops, as well as the former camp itself. This means that this border is made up of multiple instances of other 'mini' borders, for example the fences around truck stops and petrol stations are designed to prevent people gaining access to lorries so that they might board ferries undetected. While the fences and walls are most visible and somewhat expected, I have found through this research that forms of 'natural' ecology have also been enlisted to enforce the border.

Behind a large white fence, a short distance from the ferry port and running alongside the N216 highway is an eco-park (a 'Natura 2000 Habitat') which was once the site of the Jungle camp. Beginning in 2015, this camp was largely self-built by displaced people and volunteers on the far eastern edges of Calais' industrial region, a few kilometres from the main town and around half a kilometre from the ferry port. The camp originally emerged owing to its proximity to the now demolished Jules Ferry migrant centre for women and children, formerly a disused sports centre and children's holiday camp. Though estimates vary, at its height in 2016 the camp was home to around 9,000 displaced people. This was not the first camp in Calais – there had been multiple other instances of 'the Jungle' before this, since the closure of a reception centre run by the Red Cross in Sangatte, a short distance outside Calais, in 2011.[3] However it was the largest and perhaps became the most notable, especially in the lead up to the Brexit referendum vote in 2016. At this time the camp attracted a great deal of interest (in terms of media, scholarship, and attention by architects and planners) owing to its self-built nature and residents' agency and ingenuity in constructing the camp as they saw fit in very challenging conditions, including building large and impressive religious buildings, schools, shops, restaurants and cafés.

On 27 October 2016 Fabienne Buccio, the departmental state representative of Pas-de-Calais, announced: 'we have fulfilled our mission; the humanitarian dismantling operation [of the Jungle] is over.'[4] The residents having been evicted and the site cleared at the end of 2016, the site has since received far less attention but continues to play an important role in the UK-France border. While highly punitive measures ensure that another camp is not built around Calais, the city is still home to a large number of displaced people who are not allowed to 'install themselves', essentially meaning that they are not allowed to sit or lay down.

1 The name of the camp comes from the Pashto 'dzhangal', roughly meaning 'forest' (Mudu and Chattopadhyay, 2016). The Jungle does not necessarily refer to one specific space but has been used to describe several encampments around Calais for more than ten years. Despite the problematic nature of this name I use 'Jungle' because those that I engaged with in the camp referred to it in this way, and I am persuaded that the name originates from its various inhabitants, rather than from external actors. However, it is important to note that it has also been used as a racist slur. I also purposefully refer to the Jungle as a 'refugee camp' despite it never having been officially recognised as one, to reject what I view as the weaponization of the label 'migrant' in popular media and political rhetoric to argue that those in Calais are undeserving of asylum. Though 'refugee' has a specific legal definition, I refer to those I have engaged with by how they self-identify – typically as refugees and asylum seekers.

2 William Jenkins, *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape* (International Museum of Photography, 1974) and 'Introduction to The New Topographics' in *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape*. (Rochester NY: International Museum of Photography, 1975).

3 Michael Agier and Yasmine Bouagga, *The Jungle: Calais' Camps and Migrants* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018).

Shortly after the camp was cleared work began on landscaping the site into an eco-park. The Jungle was turned into a garden. The peopled roads, shops and shelters that I had encountered in previous field work in the camp in 2016 had been replaced with fen orchids and other flowers, thick scrub, a small herd of horses, artificially constructed sand dunes, various small ponds, boardwalks, and a bird viewing hide. When I visited in both 2017 and 2019 the site was almost devoid of people. I spoke with a relatively small number of displaced people on these trips to when I visited in 2016, finding that those migrating through Calais now needed to be far more careful in revealing their locations (e.g. to researchers, police, local residents), often trying to remain hidden by sleeping and hiding in small woods and bushes in the suburbs and outskirts of the city. With the Jungle removed, displaced people are forced into a constant movement, silently occupying unseen, obscured and fenced-in parts of the city and its suburbs. Indeed, this kind of invisibility is in part important and necessary for displaced people in Calais, their aim being to cross the border undetected. The removal of the Calais camp has had a marked effect, making migrating through Calais far harder and even more dangerous than when the Jungle camp existed, with regular clearances of small encampments, tents and personal belongings, as well as regular reports of violence enacted by the police.

Borders are often imagined, visualised and mapped as simple lines drawn to demarcate certain areas, but borderscape scholars have for some time argued that borders are not static, spatial or geographic entities, like a line or a single space.[5] They are heterogenous, located in legal practices and policy, variously enacted by both humans and non-humans, including police, border guards and objects such as walls, fences and passports, and are distinctive for different people (e.g. citizens or non-citizens), and things, such as goods. The borderscape is an important concept for paying attention to sites such as the former Jungle, because it attunes us (researchers, designers, architects) to the ways that borders are produced and upheld by practices that may not be immediately recognisable or obvious.

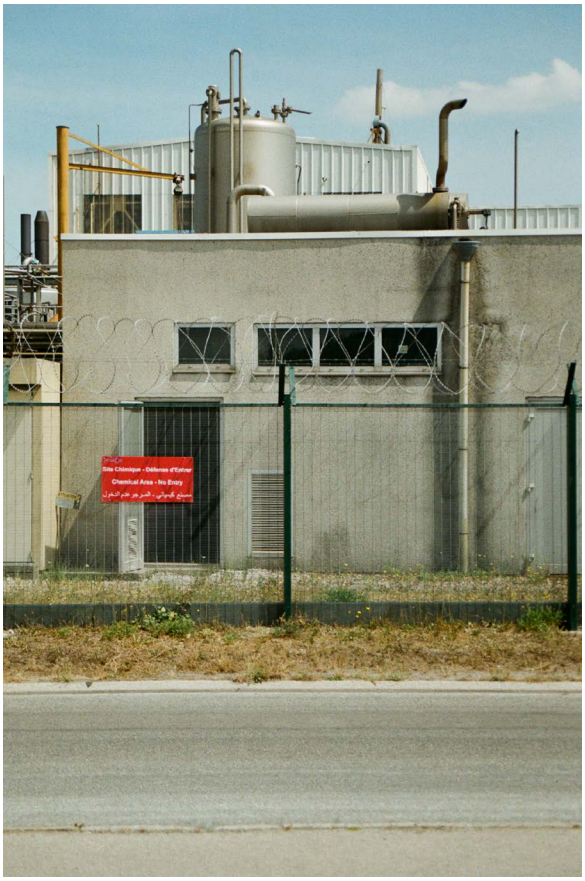
Returning to Calais, we see that transforming and landscaping the site of the former camp has become another form of somewhat unexpected bordering practice. Here, 'natural' ecology is cultivated to erase displaced people, their histories, architectures and practices for survival. Though the process of reclassifying the site as a nature reserve was planned before the camp emerged, the original plans were subsequently altered not only to encourage forms of nature, but with an explicit aim to exclude human life. While the eco-park was being constructed the then interior minister Bruno Le Roux gave a radio interview to explain that the task for landscaping this particular site was not only to re-introduce nature, but to make sure that no more camps would emerge.[6] In the camp-become-eco-park rare and protected fen orchid flowers have taken root alongside thick scrub, which begin to act as border agents. In addition to the quite obvious wire fencing surrounding the former camp, ponds flood the area to create new habitats for the birds, but also to prevent people from being able to camp or sleep in between the dunes. In addition to the forms of nature that are mobilised to restrict access and use, new architectures such as boardwalks and bird-viewing hides – ostensibly for tourists to experience and view the eco-park – provide the regularly patrolling CRS police with vantage points for surveilling the area and ensuring no camp will be built here again.[7]

4 Translated and cited in Dan Hicks and Sarah Mallet, *Lande: The Calais 'Jungle' and Beyond*, (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2019); Dominique Salomez, 'Fabienne Buccio, la préfète du Pas-de-Calais en première ligne', *La Voix du Nord*, 29 October. https://www.lavoixdunord.fr/66830/article/2016-10-29/fabienne-buccio-la-prefete-du-pas-de-calais-en-premiere-ligne (accessed 11 December 2023).

5 Chiara Brambilla, Jussi Laine and Gianluca Bocchi, *Borderscaping: Imaginations and Practices of Border Making* (London: Routledge, 2015); Elena Dell'agnese and Anne-Laure Amilhat Szary (2015) 'Borderscapes: From Border Landscapes to Border Aesthetics', *Geopolitics* 20.1–10 (2015) doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2015.1014284.

6 Priscilla Vandeville, *Le Ministre de l'Intérieur ne laissera pas s'installer une nouvelle jungle à Calais*, (2017) https://www.radio6.fr/article-23385-le-ministre-de-interieur-ne-laissera-pas-installer-unenouvelle-jungle-a-calais.html (accessed 17 March 2021).

7 The CRS (Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité) are the branch of the French police most often employed to deal with crowd and riot control. In Calais, the police have been regularly accused of violence against refugees, and police violence was (and still is) regularly reported as a state tactic for dealing with displaced people living in Calais (Meadows, 2019; Refugee Info Bus, 2019) and to a lesser extent volunteers working with refugees (Vigny, 2018).


Site Chimique - Défense d'Entrer
Chemical Area - No Entry


GRAFTech


FONCIFRANCE
ICI
VOTRE
TERRAIN A BATIR
Votre CONSEIL
Adeline Vlaminck
06 11 44 33 26
Les derniers terrains viabilisés...
ici


MIGRANTS


ACCÈS
INTERDIT


Cheers
Wine & Beers
OPEN
CAR PARK
AT THE REAR
STATIONNEMENT 1 HEURE
RESERVE AUX CLIENTS
SEULEMENT
FREE PARKING
FOR CUSTOMERS
ONLY FOR UP 1 HOUR
OPEN
CAR PARK
AT THE REAR
ENTRANCE


LINCS 2 CALAIS
PEACE +
LOVE +
UNITY
FreeSCOTLAND


Zone des Dunes
Stationnement Réglementé
Regulated Parking
Reglementierter Parkplatz
85 Places
Rue Marcel Doret
70 Places
CALAIS


#ITOOAMHUMAN
FREE
PALESTINE!


PN
5
See you in UK


NO BORDER
NO NATION
NOBODY
DESERVES
TO LIVE
THIS WAY!
DAME
DIBABA
11/9/13
????
JUNGLE
VUITTON


ATTENTION
Vous entrez dans une zone de nidification
AIDEZ-NOUS À PROTÉGER LES STERNES


PALAIS DU RIRE

On a site such as this, scratching the surface of the veneer of the eco-park reveals a site that is made up of ruins built among more ruins. The site of the camp-become eco-park is surrounded by chemical factories (e.g. a Graftech factory is prominent in the photographs), giving the air a toxic thickness and stench. Parts of the land had previously been used as landfill sites and were designated as contaminated with hazardous industrial substances under the Seveso III European Union (EU) Directive.[8] This meant that when the French authorities and contractors came to clear the camp many of the remaining objects and pieces of architecture were churned into the sand dunes as another kind of landfill. Over time, these sand dunes gradually shift with the weather, meaning on my trips to the site, objects from the former camp haunt the eco-park regularly become exposed, refusing the rot down or to stay covered by the pleasant veneer of eco-park. On my visits since the camp was removed I have found clothing, toothbrushes, Lego pieces and other toys, as well as dozens of empty CS gas containers.[9]

It is very difficult to argue against an eco-park, because the mobilisation of 'nature', and 'ecology' seems to be suggestive of a time before politics. It is beyond the scope of this short article, but what it at stake here is that the way in which 'nature' is understood (as somehow neutral, inherently good) means it resists criticism, and can be deployed very effectively to reinforce inequalities. Of course, this is well known when we look at practices like green-washing. In the Jungle-become-garden eco-park, mastery over nature takes on an additional political dimension to prevent particular presences or possibilities of human life on the site. As Hélène Frichot has reminded us, 'to assume that ecology demarcates a basic good is to overlook Bateson's reminder that there is an ecology of weeds, much as there is an ecology of bad ideas; ecologies flourish and ecologies produce the scent and scenes of death.'[10] Rather, the eco-park should perhaps be thought of as the pleasant veneer of what the UK government have called 'the creation of a hostile environment'.[11] Importantly, this argument should not be read as adopting a normative argument that humans should take precedent over forms of nature, but rather to tune into what the relationships between these natures and politics are, and what they might tell us about borders. By thinking of the Jungle as a garden it becomes apparent that it contains very particular forms of (and relations between) natures and humans that are the upshot of deliberate design and therefore politics.[12] When seen in a cosmopolitical sense, the design of this garden is anything but neutral, and requires us to unpick how nature becomes instrumentalised and mobilised in this kind of setting to further constrain already marginalised people, and to create new forms of border.

8 Thom Davies, Arshad Isakjee and Surindar Dhesi, *Violent Inaction: The Necropolitical Experience of Refugees in Europe*, Antipode. Epub ahead of print 1 January 2017. DOI: 10.1111/anti.12325.

9 Liam Healy, *DUF Zine 10: The Site of the Former Jungle, Calais* (DUF, 2018) and *DUF Zine 11: Objects From the Former Jungle Camp, Calais* (DUF, 2018).

10 Hélène Frichot, *Creative Ecologies: Theorizing the Practice of Architecture* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2019), p. 62.

11 Theresa May, Speech by Home Secretary on second reading of Immigration Bill (2013) https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/speech-by-home-secretary-on-second-reading-of-immigration-bill (accessed 5 March 2020).

12 Bruno Latour and Albena Yaneva, 'Give me a gun and I will make all buildings move: An ANT's view of architecture', in *Explorations in architecture: Teaching, design, research* (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag Ag, 2008), pp. 80-89.


Travaux de démolition et de renaturation
du Centre Jules Ferry
Ville de Calais et Eden 62
Durée du chantier : 6 mois
Maîtrise d'ouvrage :

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'QUEERING' SOHO: CONTESTING THE BORDERS OF NORMATIVE SPACE IN THE NEOLIBERAL CITY

Joshua McVeigh and
Anastasia Karandinou

ABSTRACT

In the context of the recent Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements, the issue of inclusivity and diversity, identity, gender, race, 'otherness', is brought forth in many disciplines, architecture, academia, teaching and design practices. Although this is, of course, a positive progress, one needs to be mindful of the complexities and the potentially conflictual effects of a normalisation, especially if this dismisses or disallows space for further processes of disruption, or if this commodifies queer space, objectifies the other, and hence distances it further. In this context, this study reflects on the relationship between place, bodies, contested norms and social conventions, focusing on Soho, London as a case study, and on the associated evolution of queer spaces and narratives. It reflects upon the complex and shifting relationship between the visible/norm and the peripheral/deviant/hidden territories and their performative nature in the city.

INTRODUCTION

Architecture 'queers' places. 'Queering' is used in the title of the article to signify the intention of questioning and exploring the constantly changing nature of what is considered to be the 'other'. It signifies the intention to explore the nature and performance of places, the elements that are at times perceived as deviant, and how the very change of this perception affects what happens in places. With reference to Teresa de Lauretis' reflections, queer and queering is used in order to move away from a vocabulary that juxtaposes the gay/lesbian to the heterosexual, considering the latter as the norm and homogenising it, leaving out other cultural, social, ethnic parameters; is used to avoid or open-up the 'constructed silences', as de Lauretis puts it.[1] 'Queering', often used as a verb in the context of gender activism, reflects on the action of destabilising, distorting, shifting a place, through action and performance within it, or at times through the way in which it is approached and discussed. As such, this paper also opens up the question as to what could potentially queer Soho, and other places, now and in the future. What kind of performance or action would queer a place, destabilise perceptions, and allow for other things to happen, other identities to feel comfortable and present? In other words, we reflect and re-address a fundamental architectural question: How can places be queered? We define this as a fundamental architectural question, in the sense that we consider architecture as what shapes places, behaviours and perceptions.

In this article, navigating through the performing of different identities in Soho is seen as a form of queering.

Additionally, we propose some open-ended questions regarding the action of queering, such as: What everyday actions and performances would challenge the current normative perceptions, and create a more inclusive and safe environment for difference? And how would these queering actions and performances be different from those of the past? How do they evolve alongside the normalisation of the former ones? Where are these observed, and by whom are these performed? Perhaps we need to look at what constitutes queering (or performing) in a more open and sensitive way, as we may still be missing out the emerging body languages that queer spaces.

This article considers 'queering' in two ways: (a) as an active reading of stories of a place, and (b) exploring possibilities for potentially new actions that queer (verb) places in ways that have not been yet performed or mapped. Walking us through narratives of queering performances of the past is meant to allow and inspire us to imagine new ways for queering places, for what queering might need to mean now.

The co-authors of the paper – both architects and involved with the performative aspect of places – are addressing the subject through their first-hand experience of Soho and contested places, as well as through their critical reflection on the relevant literature. Both are particularly interested in what constitutes inclusivity, and its inherent paradoxes. We are interested in the behaviours that spaces shape, forbid, trigger, as well as how the perception of the deviant makes spaces evolve. In this paper, when we use 'we', we refer to the co-authors. For the first author, as a gay individual coming into their queerness, the concept of gender identity is relevant on a personal level – and I sought a deeper understanding of the relevant spatial implications. What does it mean to be queer in London today, how have the events, spaces and communities I have grown to love and enjoy come to be? What constituted them in the past, and more importantly what will guarantee their longevity/existence well into the future? Or how will they otherwise evolve, shift, re-locate allowing still

1 Teresa de Lauretis, 'Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities An Introduction', *Differences* 3(2) (1991), pp. iii–xviii.

2 Lynda Johnston, 'Sexuality and Space', in James D. Wright (ed), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2015), p. 8.

3 Sara Ahmed. *Queer Phenomenology* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 9.

4 David Woodhead, '"Surveillant Gays": HIV, Space, and the Constitution of Identities', in David Bell and Gill Valentine *Mapping Desire* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 236.

inclusive expressions of life? For the second author, queerness is not an embodied experience in the same way; for the second author the conversation on one type of otherness is an open question that potentially reveals things about other types of otherness and difference, such as gender, age, ethnic background, beliefs, and way of living. Having lived in several different countries and worked in the building/architectural/academic industries, the perception of difference and the relevant spatial implications have informed the second author's questions. For both authors, the critical observation of the evolution of a queer space and performance brings them in touch with the feeling of uncertainty about the evasive, ephemeral nature of these spaces and raises questions regarding community, safety and inclusivity.

There is no denying the context of which lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex spaces may provide for marginalized sexualities and gender identities, in that they may cultivate 'safe' spaces of free identity expression and negotiation. Historically, the cultivation of LGBTQIA+ spaces was a result of tireless prosecution of marginalized, sexed bodies that did not conform to a society deeply rooted in heterosexuality and heteronormativity. As Lynda Johnston states, 'sexuality and space are mutually constituted – space makes sexuality and sexuality makes space. Sexuality – as with other identity categories like gender and race – is not fixed or static, yet is constantly shifting across various cultural and social landscapes.'[2] This seems to be drawing upon Sara Ahmed's reflection on queer phenomenology, where bodies are 'shaped by their dwellings and take shape by dwelling'.[3] For David Woodhead, 'space does not stand waiting for us to give meanings to it, but that space *becomes*, that space is *constituted, through meaning*.'[4] Through different contexts, authors such as the above reflect on the how bodies are situated and oriented by – and orient/define – spaces. The sensual back and forth between sexuality and space resembles an enigmatic improvisation of meaning, language and knowledge, which grows and transforms as the script is negotiated. As such, sexuality, identity, space and sexed bodies are choreographed entities heavily influenced by performance, culture and politics, acting as pleasure houses to explore and practice one's identity.

In this paper we will reflect on the notion of performance and the queer, to contextualise how we use these notions. We then explore a series of queer stories of Soho, which allow us to reflect on the evolving and changing relationships between place, performance/life, cultures and identities. Following that, we reflect on the 'deviant' in the streets and public space and on the demonstrations of queerness, leading to our final sections on further reflections and open-ended questions drawn from this journey.

PERFORMANCE, "OTHER" IDENTITIES [& THE "QUEER"]

Taking a performance-centred approach to queer identity and space, we must ask: what constitutes a performance? What is the culture and history on which these performances are based? Which of these performances enacted by queers are deemed integral, and which are deemed deviant? As these performances of identity and expression are enacted, re-enacted and reproduced, what becomes of their future meaning – and what becomes of the spaces in which they are played? It is important to note the significance of which historic performances of queer expression and identity have been used to contest normative space, and the meaning these performances will hold well into the future as the dialogue of collective and individual queer identities are negotiated. Moe Meyer articulates that Acquired In-Body Techniques are the means in which sexed bodies use performance to create a sexually liberated space, where the meaning these performances hold on space and identity are thereby used as the basis for future performances, and so on.[5] These acts, according to Meyer, comprised of bodies and meaning, provide 'othered' sexual minorities with the space to exhibit strength, power, identity and safety. A parallelism can be drawn to Ahmed's approach and reflection on performance, body and space. From a phenomenological perspective, and with reference to Henri Lefebvre, she uses the notion of 'orientation' and 'orienting' to describe what effect space can have upon bodies and bodies upon spaces. In this context, for Ahmed, queering would be the 'out-of-line' orientation of the body.[6] From the performance of camp and the stage of drag, to cruising grounds and political demonstrations, or the dance floors of bars and clubs, cultural performance holds a significant value within the queer experience, through the negotiation of discourse which hopes to constrain our embodied queer identity and spaces.

This is not to say that these constructed spaces of improvisation and amplification are free from constraint or contestation. It has become increasingly important to continuously question the current structures put in place in the cultural spaces that sexual minorities have relied on so heavily. It is key to note here that, as Johnston remarks, much of the study of sexuality and space has not yet intersected with other identity classifications. It is no surprise that the spaces we inhabit and the haunts we frequent can bring different identities together. It is essential to remember that although different sexual identities may often be categorized under the same umbrella, one must recognise that not all face the same issues and exclusionary processes. Therefore, in the study of sexuality and space regarding queer people and spaces, it is vital that we (the authors) not only question the relationships between sexed bodies, sexuality and space, but other identities as well. Taking a radical approach to the study of space will open future conversation of exclusionary forces like hetero/homonormativity, neoliberalism and gentrification, regarding gender, race, class, age, disability and sexual identity. In other words, we hope that this conversation and observations on the queering of spaces, and on the performative nature of place, will unlock conversations about other types of 'otherness'.

The term queer is often used in different ways in a variety of settings. Some, simply use it in a way meaning gay, while others use it as an overarching term of identity regarding the totality of the LGBTQIA+.[7] This umbrella term is furthermore used in parallel when referring to 'queer' spaces that otherwise predominantly cater to gay men. Lisa Duggan explains that 'for others queer is a radical political entity better able to cross boundaries and construct more fluid identities.'[8]

5 Moe Meyer, *An Archaeology of Posing: essays on camp, drag, and sexuality* (Madison: Macater Press, 2010), p. 152.

6 Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology.*

7 Natalie Oswin, 'Critical geographies and the uses of sexuality: deconstructing queer space', *Progress in Human Geography*, 32.1 (2008), pp. 89-103.

8 Lisa Duggan, *Making it Perfectly Queer*, (2006), p. 21. Available at: http://www.faculty.umb.edu/heike.schotten/readings/duggan.pdf (Accessed 19th June 2023).

It is furthermore imperative to note that LGBTQIA+ is not synonymous with gay.[9] Queer, then, is a political statement which contests heteronormativity and homonormativity, celebrating gender, sexuality and the fluidity of both, blurring the binaries of normative culture. Gavin Brown states that 'Queer revels in its otherness, difference, and distance from mainstream society, even as it recognises that this distance is always incomplete.'[10] Queer, henceforth, is an anti-normative, non-conforming powerhouse that seeks to upset the frameworks of normative culture and space, while disrupting patters of exclusivity in public and private space.[11]

QUEER HISTORIES OF SOHO

The most accepted boundaries of Soho are generally marked by Shaftsbury Avenue, Regent Street, Oxford Street and Charring Cross Road, its core being the little grid of streets north and south of Old Compton Street.[12] According to Marco Venturi Soho was initially conceived for the aristocracy, but soon after it gradually was known as a slum stricken with poverty, consumption, prostitution, gambling and crime, and was frequently referred to as the city's red-light district.[13] Its indulgent culture made it the perfect setting for a nightlife culture, where it has continuously been referred to as 'the place to be' throughout its history. Likewise, Soho is consistently described as a nocturnal destination of queerness on a variety of different extremes. A distinct urban queer culture. It was associated with nonconformity and deviance from the 'normal'.[14] It is important to note here that most of the research regarding the sexual history of Soho details the stories and experiences of gay, white men. As Peter Ackroyd explains, 'The crowds, the spaces, the alleys, the incomprehensible babble of voices, induced in some a creeping sense of chaps and confusion where all boundaries were ignored. The crowd itself could be a sexual experience… a labyrinth where gay life could flourish…'[15] With that in mind, the intent of this section is to analyse key moments of queer performance and space which rivaled the sexual and spatial norms of society at the time.

Clubs of Resistance: It was in 1691 that the Society of Reformation of Manners began its undertakings which set to put an end to sodomy and homosexuality within the streets of London. The actions put into place were a result of public consciousness concerning what then became known as molly houses, which were a steadily growing number of clubs and underground establishments in which sexual minorities, mainly gay men, could meet, drink, dance and have sex.[16]

9 Ben Campkin, Laura Marshall, 'London's nocturnal queer geographies', *Soundings*, 70 (2018) https://doi.org/10.3898/SOUN.70.06.2018, pp. 82-96.

10 Gavin Brown, 'Mutinous Eruptions: Autonomous Spaces of Radical Queer Activism', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 29.11 (2007) pp. 26-85.

11 Ali E. Erol, 'Queer contestation of neoliberal and heteronormative moral geographies during #occupygezi', *Sexualities*, 21.3 (2018), pp. 428-445.

12 Deborah Philips, *And this is my friend Sandy: Sandy Wilson's The boy friend, London theatre and gay culture* (London: Methuen Drama, 2021).

13 Marco Venturi, *Out of Soho, Back Into the Closet: Re-Thinking the London Gay Community.* (unpublished doctoral thesis, UCL, 2018), p. 242.

14 Philips, *And this is my friend Sandy.*

15 Peter Ackroyd, *Queer City* (London: Vintage Detail, 2017), p. 218.

16 Ackroyd, *Queer City*, p. 97.

It is the performative contestation of these spaces – which transgressed the normative ideologies of sexuality and space at the time – on which future underground queer clubs would be created heading towards the 1960s.

By the late 1800s, Café Royal and Kettners were two establishments known as temples for queer London.[17] In the early 1900s, supply and demand of safe queer spaces increased leading to more underground clubs and speakeasies opening in Soho and the City's West End. The Empire, the Trocadero, the Wellington, the Griffon, Lyons Corner, the Circle and the Tea, the Kandy Lounge, the Pink Elephant, the A&B and Kettle were established as gay bars and speakeasies of the era whose primary customer basis was gay men. According to Ackroyd, there were only two clubs in the West End which catered to queer women, Soho's Ham and Bone Club, however, they soon developed a 'rigid sexual coding which had developed and divided "girls" into "butch" or "femme".'[18] 'You had to pass as one or the other […] Or you were deemed to possess no sexual identity at all.'[19] The notion of the 'otherness' and exclusion, of some kind, protrudes and it is worth observing and acknowledging it, like all conscious and subconscious biases. It is also interesting to note that it was not until the 1930s that saw the opening of Soho's first lesbian night club, Smokey Joes, paralleling the issue in present day, where there is a huge disparity of bars for lesbian, transgender and queer people.

The Palm Court Club and '43' were two upmarket queer establishments dedicated to the upper echelons and aristocrats of society which highly contrasted the neighbourhoods many dive bars and underground clubs that adorned Gerrard Street in the 1900s.[20] Revubar, a private club on a membership only basis, was the first to give Soho its sexy reputation, according to Daniel Farson.[21] The 1917 club, the 50-50 Club, the Cave of Harmony, the Little Club, Coffee Ann and 42nd that catered to diverse groups of people. Most notably, Virginia Woolf, founder of The 1917 Club described the patrons of her club as follows:

> Hindus, Parsees, puritans, free lovers, Quakers, teetotallers, heavy drinkers, Morris Dancers and Folk Song Experts […] members of the London School of Economics, Trade Union Officials, journalists, poets, actors, actresses, Communists. Theosophists. In short, every colour and creed, every 'ism' and 'ist' was represented. The club had a reputation of being fashionably or unfashionably bisexual.[22]

Femme Boys & Painted Pooffs: Throughout history, from as far back as Roman London, homosexuals were habitually characterized or identified as 'pretty, long haired, clean shaven, effeminate gestures and ways of speaking and moving. Effeminate was referred to as being self-indulgent and silly.'[23] It was in the eighteenth century when sexual identities of gay men and women began to be tested, where they were able to adopt different personae that aligned with societal gender and sexuality norms of the time, from being butch or femme from one moment to the next. These experimentations of sexual identity, although done from in the privacy of one's home or within the many underground and private clubs of Soho, were political statements which contested the pressures of an incredibly heteronormative society. Similarly, camp, a form of queer performance, was used – as Ackroyd also mentions – by queer and homosexual men to divert, shock, stand out, through eccentric performances of drama and humour. It is important to clarify, however, that camp is not limited to comedic effeminacy. And although the mere idea of camp is to be more funny or more 'other', it is important to define camp primarily as a form of sexual and gender identity rather than of comedic performance. Otherwise, it makes way for the argument perpetuated by heteronormative constructs that sexual identity minorities are not to be taken seriously.[24]

17 Ackroyd, *Queer City,* p. 199.

18 Bart Eeckhout, 'Alan Hollinghurst's Fictional Ways of Queering London' in Simon Avery and Katherine M. Graham (eds), *Sex, Time and Place – Queer Histories of London, c. 1850 to the Present* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 220.

19 Ackroyd, *Queer City,* p. 227.

20 Eeckhout, 'Alan Hollinghurst's Fictional Ways of Queering London', p. 221.

21 Daniel Farson, *Soho in the fifties* (London: Michael Joseph Publisher, 1988), pp. 74-80.

22 Eeckhout, 'Alan Hollinghurst's Fictional Ways of Queering London', p. 223.

23 Ackroyd, *Queer City*, p. 3.

24 Meyer, *An Archaeology of Posing: essays on camp, drag, and sexuality*, pp. 1-145.

Simply put, camp exists as a distinct performance of power and sexual identity that transgressed the normative gender and sexual binaries of day-to-day society. Camp, both lived/enacted and experienced, temporarily dominates and defines places, allows behaviours, and shapes them. It shapes places.

Gender expression was one of the ways in which queer and homosexual men would make themselves visible to one another. The use of camp, effeminate gestures, fashion, and makeup were common performances of outward gender and sexual identity expression. These performances however did result in anxieties from police as they took to the streets to control homosexuality and sex between men. According to Dominic Janes, makeup was used by homosexual men for a variety of reasons, to appear more feminine, masculine, or androgynous.[25] Nonetheless, the 'man with the powder puff' became of significant imagery in London between the 1920s and 30s, as it disobeyed normative gender roles of the time and reinstated the fact that London has space for homosexuals during a time of cosmopolitan transformation, which attracted other young, middle-class gay men from the suburbs in order to identify and express themselves freely.[26] In order to avoid being detained by police wandering the streets private parties were often held in the basements and secret rooms of the flats in Soho.[27] Although not classified as safe spaces due to political and societal norms of the time, these spaces did provide many queer and homosexual men with the space to be oneself, where they would adorn themselves in 'feminine' clothing and makeup and speak and gesture with 'effeminacy' as if enacting a character from a play truest to their identity. Areas around Drury Lane and Lower Regent Street were said to be 'habitual haunts' of the painted pooffs.[28]

It goes without saying that these notions of gender bending, identity and self-expression are undoubtedly still performed today as way to express one's truest self freely in the eye of the public. Gender nonconformity, drag and self-expression are tactile queer performance that transgress the norm and attempt to break or dismantle sexual and gender constructs that may no longer serve a purpose, especially in their current form. Janes says that 'painted poofs should be seen not simply as a sub-category of "effeminate" homosexual men, but as a partially empowered group of people able to make a variety of radical statements about the human condition, including on the advantages of eroticizing its own abject failure to life up to contemporary ideal of gender'.[29] The gender bending expressions are not only expressions of one's own identity, but a manifestation of beliefs and as such they empower others and constitute a political act.

25 Dominic Janes, 'Famous for the Makeup She Put on Her Face', in Simon Avery and Katherine M. Graham (eds), *Sex, Time and Place – Queer Histories of London, c. 1850 to the Present* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 177.

26 Janes, 'Famous', pp. 171-172.

27 Frank Mort, 'Cityscapes: Consumption, Masculinities and the Mapping of London since 1950', *Urban Studies*, 35.5-6 (1998) pp. 889-907.

28 Carolyn Conroy, 'Mingling with the Ungodly: Simeon Solomon in Queer Victorian London', in Simon Avery and Katherine M. Graham (eds), *Sex, Time and Place – Queer Histories of London, c. 1850 to the Present* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 188.

29 Janes, *Famous for the Makeup She Put on Her Face*, p. 179.

EROTIC THEATRE

Since its early history, London has been a site of erotic theatre. According to Ackroyd, the theatre and the stage were used as pickup joints for queer men, who proclaimed the theatre as their meeting places. The theatre in post war London was frequently used by gay men and aristocracy as pick up points or cruising grounds for gay sex. The dark corridors and corners of the theatre provided the perfect setting, where gay men 'generally congregated in secret, anyone could join in if they felt comfortable and whatever happened in these spaces was nobody else's business.'[30] These sexed spaces were idealized for sexual encounters at the time as men could 'safely' congregate in private without being caught and provided a space away from the streets and other cruising grounds frequented by gay men which risked being seen by police. The theatre, described by Frank Mort, was integral to the bohemianism and sexual transgression that Soho offered: 'On stage and off stage, dancers and showgirls projected sexual personalities and bodily idioms that disrupted traditional dichotomies of vice and virtue.'[31]

The theatre scene of post-war London furthermore came with the use of Polari, which was a frequent slang and way of speaking often used by gay men. Primarily, Polari was simply the language of theatre that were associated with the stage. Polari was extensively used by gay actors in the London theatre scene – where Philips adds, 'while many of these performers were gay there were plenty who weren't' – and was then later adopted by gay men who frequented the theatre and theatre clubs of Soho.[32] This theatre-speak became extensively spoken in the bars and theatre clubs of Soho where many of the performers and theatre-goers would gather, thus developing a mutual language and community among gay and queer men who frequented these establishments. While its use originates in the theatre, Polari became a secret code to disguise the use of sexual language between queer men.[33] The use of Polari gradually began to spread amongst other members of the queer community in London, where traces of the slang are often still used today in performances of sexual, gender identity and drag.

The French House, Rockingham, The Ivy, The Players, were private theatre clubs of Soho at the time, while the Prince of Wales Theatre, Theatre Royal, and the Drury Lane Theatre provided intimate spaces around the stage for queer and gay men to gather. Additionally, The Golden Lion, The Salisbury, The Lamb and Flag and The Fitzroy Tavern were other clubs frequented by queer and gay men of the stage.[34] Farson describes, 'for the most part its occupants were obvious male homosexuals who dyed their hair and rouged their cheeks and behaved in an effeminate manner with effeminate voices.'[35] While the theatre and theatre clubs of Soho did provide space for queers to find expression and identity in a city of suppression, there were, however, still processes of exclusion enacted within them. The primary clientele of these establishments were young, white, homosexual and queer men, aristocrats, and stage performers. Classism and racism ran rampant in these communities, leaving out many marginalized identities. Instances of anarchist performance like these contested the normative societal beliefs of the time and scattered small pockets of queer community across the London theatre scene. Of course, these performances would be considered a political statement of the time. However, it is important to recall that these instances were acted out in the private to ensure the safety of individuals and the community. A hushed and faceless aggression in contest of unjust inequalities.

30 Philips, *And this is my friend Sandy.*

31 Frank Mort, 'Cityscapes: Consumption, Masculinities and the Mapping of London since 1950', pp. 890-891.

32 Philips, *And this is my friend Sandy.*

33 Ackroyd, *Queer City,* p. 186.

34 Ibid.; Mort, 'Cityscapes'; Philips, *And this is my friend Sandy.*

35 Farson, *Soho in the fifties*, p. 81.

36 Richard Dyer, *Culture of Queers* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 78.

DEVIANT IN THE STREETS

It is widely known that throughout history sexual minorities often had little freedom to express themselves in the privacy of their own homes due to family pressures. Lacking any sort of safe privacy, sexual minorities, primarily gay men, would find spaces of 'insecure privacy' in the public to enact sexual activities.[36] These redefined spaces of privacy disrupt conventional discourse between the public and the private and constructs space for gay men looking for queer sex, with a sense of safety and anonymity without the pressure to be 'out'. This is, however, not to say that all forms of public homosexual sex acts are derived from a scrutiny of family life and heteronormative values of private sex. As Richard Dyer argues, some – the sadomasochist and the voyeur – thrive in the mystery, excitement, anticipation and chance of being caught.

Public toilets, the streets, parks, railway termini, the theatre, bars and clubs are all places throughout history where public queer sex was shared. Mapping of cruising in London shows Soho (and London's West End as a whole) has been a popular destination for gay men on the hunt for public queer sex. The framework on which Soho was built, spaces of consumption, Georgian architecture, narrow streets and wandering alley ways invisible to the public eye, made it an ideal destination of secure public sex.[37] Ackroyd notes that Theatre Royal, the Red Lion Soho, the Drury Lane Theatre and the Prince of Wales Theatre were regular, interior haunts of gay men. Bart Eeckhout adds to this list to include Nantwich's Gentlemen's Club, Royal Opera House, Corinthian Club (The Corry), Queensberry Hotel and Brutus Cinema.[38] Ackroyd goes on to signify that Jermyn Street, Windmill Street, the eastern ends of Regent Street, the small alleyways between Orange Street and Trafalgar Square, the Burlington Arcade, and Leicester Square were frequent spots of gay men to engage in public sex in the streets and dark corners of Soho and West London. 'But the public lavatories were still number one and were the leading spaces for public sexual encounters […] The toilets were covered in pornographic graffiti. Holes carved into the cubical walls to pass noted to one another.'[39] The toilets at Jermyn Street, Hill Place, Edgware Road, Oxford Circus, Tottenham Road, Chancery Lane, the bottom of Argyll Street, Piccadilly Circus, Brydges Place and Rose Street – these public spaces not only gratified the voyeur's itch but provided a new sense of private security and complete anonymity as they defied the normative structures of both private and public space, restructuring space for themselves.[40]

It was the Wolfenden Committee which recommended the partial decriminalisation of homosexual sex between two consenting men over the age of 21 in private, which eventually passed into law as the Sexual Offences Act in 1967. Although at first glance this seems like a step in the right direction for homosexual men, the capacity of the recommendation truly came from the ambition to regulate homosexuality by bringing it into greater visibility within the public realm. This legislation put considerable danger on the men who practiced sex in public space. As space was now made available in the private for gay men to have sex through legislation, it made way for increased police raids of public gay spaces and establishments of consumption in a fight for power and control. This authoritarian shift of homosexuality from the private to the public meant that gay men who could not practice homosexual sex in the safety of their home, could no longer sexually exist in the public, removing all spaces of gender, identity, and sexual expression, forcing them to hide in plain sight.[41] Juridical systems, as Judith Butler – with reference to Michel Foucault – argues, 'produce the subjects they subsequently come to represent,' and, in a way, define categories that shape behaviours and perceptions.[42]

36 Richard Dyer, *Culture of Queers* (Routledge, London, 2001), p. 78.

37 Eeckhout, 'Alan Hollinghurst's Fictional Ways of Queering London', p. 208.

38 Eeckhout, 'Alan Hollinghurst's', p.208.

39 Ackroyd, *Queer City*, pp. 211-212.

40 Mort, 'Cityscapes: Consumption, Masculinities and the Mapping of London since 1950', pp. 890-891.

41 David Bell, 'Erotic Topographies: On the Sexuality and Space Network', *Antipode* 26.1 (1994), pp. 96-100 (p. 96); Gill Valentine, 'Queer Bodies and the Production of Space' in *Handbook of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (2002). Available at: https://omnilogos.com/queer-bodies-and-production-of-space/ (Accessed 19th June 2023); Nancy Duncan, *BodySpace. Destabilising Geographies of Gender and Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1996); Johnston, 'Sexuality and Space', pp. 808–812; Lawrence Knopp, 'Sexuality and Urban Space: A Framework of Analysis', in David Bell and Gill Valentine, *Mapping Desire* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 149-161.

In this context, the various reiterations of laws demonstrate the cultural and societal shifts, while, in turn, shaping perceptions, categorisations, and shifts as to what is allowed, and what – else – no longer is.

Purification of space in the guise of health promotion demonises cultural spaces like cruising grounds as deviant, "other" and unsafe. These spaces should be granted significance as these spaces of sexualized phenomena cannot be promoted or reproduced in the same ways as metropolitan spaces of consumption, as they are 'democratic spaces and encounters that resist purification'.[43] Cruising is a leading example of a counterculture of queers that disrupts neoliberal and heteronormative structures and redistributes and tests the levels of power they put into place.[44]

DEMONSTRATIONS OF QUEERNESS

Following the partial decriminalisation of homosexual sex between men in 1967, a new social change was prompted within the LGBTQIA+ community in London. In the summer of 1969 in New York City, a series of violent police raids of prominent queer spaces of the city's gay village prompted retaliation from the queer community, where they took to the streets in protest of the discriminatory acts they faced. The Stonewall Riots demanded equality and rejected discrimination, which incited the formation of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF). The GLF 'was marked at what seemed to many, to be the first assertion of gay identity without apology or equivocation[…]. It represented, therefore, the single most vocal sexual opposition to what soon became known (at least among many queers) as 'straight' culture.'[45] The following year, in 1972, the first Pride parade was held in London, where prideful supporters marched in the streets from Trafalgar Square to Hyde Park in a demonstration of power. This newfound unapologetic visibility provided sexual minorities with the space and opportunity to live and act as openly as they would like. Of course, many still lacked the confidence to do so in an unbalanced and normative public society. Importantly, discrimination and violence against queers was quite obviously a prevalent issue in London, therefore, many sexual minorities that were less tolerated and accepted than homosexuals and did not yet feel comfortable to express themselves freely in public. This movement of visibility did however lead to the opening of many large-scale gay club nights in Soho, modeled after New York City's Studio 54. In 1976, Sundown Club was opened off Tottenham Court Road, hosting queer parties Bang! on Mondays and Saturdays, and Propaganda on Thursdays. Following, Heaven was opened in 1980, was introduced under the rail arches in Viller Street.[46]

In 1982 there were whispers of a new gay illness, soon being referred 'gay man's cancer' and the 'gay plague'. The AIDS crisis devastated London's gay community as a result of the government's lack of response and intervention. The general public of London became hostile and believed that gay men had deserved the crisis, bringing it on themselves. Suddenly, the lives of gay men and AIDS was broadcasted everywhere – in the papers, forums of health, housing and government, developing a destructive dialogue that would set back progress of equality and acceptance within public society.[47] In 1988, the Conservative government introduced Clause 23 into the Local Government Act, which commanded that authority should not promote homosexuality, teach of homosexuality in school or broadcast information that would promote homosexuality as an authentic lifestyle choice or sexual identity.

42 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 4.

43 David Bell and Jon Binnie, 'Authenticating Queer Space: Citizenship, Urbanism and Governance', *Urban Studies*, 41.9 (2004), p. 1812.

44 Erol, 'Queer contestation of neoliberal and heteronormative moral geographies during #occupygezi', pp. 428-445.

45 Ackroyd, *Queer City,* p. 226.

46 Venturi, *Out of Soho, Back Into the Closet: Re-Thinking the London Gay Community*, p. 242.

47 Johnston, 'Sexuality and Space'; Woodhead, '"Surveillant Gays"'.

It was believed that AIDS was synonymous with spaces, pushing harmful stigmas of 'cleanliness' onto the gay identity and gay spaces of pleasure and consumption and would therefore transform the homosexual aesthetic surrounding gay men themselves and gay spaces.[48] As Anderson argues, 'constituting a "clean break" with earlier forms of urban gay culture now stigmatised as "dirty" and "unhealthy", the homonormative aesthetic can be viewed as an example of "de-generational unremembering" following the first traumatic phase of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s.'[49]

In response to the unfair scrutiny and stigmatization from the government, media and general public radical queer activist organization, Act-Up, was formed. Taking to the streets in powerful protest, fueled with aggression and determination to reclaim their space and fight for the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community. Although an incredibly meaningful moment in queer history, radical activists had, 'painted the contemporary white gay male clone as the poster boy of white middle class gayness.'[50] By doing so, this statement of homonormative performance of aesthetics questions the identities and value of other sexual minorities as authentic and reconstructs the relationships between queer theory and intersectionalities of race, gender, class, ability, and age, thus reinforcing inequality and exclusionary norms.

Given the scale of the AIDS crisis and the trajectory damaged identity placed onto the gay community by media government and society, all aspects of homosexual culture and aesthetics were skewed. Throughout the 90's references were made of the 'clean' and 'hygienic' gay male and gay space. From then on, the homonormative image of homosexuality was painted as young, white, fit and clean shaven. As a result, the purification of gay space had begun and the 'desexualized gentrified gay district' was born.[51] Because heterosexuality is seen as the norm, gay establishments of consumption began to open themselves up to the street. Reinventing their interiors as 'clean' and 'sanitary' following international styles of European universalism, or a projection of whiteness, and a direct contrast of the blacked-out windows and dark spaces which lined the streets of Soho in anonymity. According to Johan Andersson, 'the first new generation gay bar in Soho was Village Soho, opening on the crossroads of Wardour Street and Old Compton Street.'[52] More bars opened soon after – Bar Code, KuBar, Kudos, Village Soho, the Yard and Freedom, which followed the same purified normative aesthetics.[53]

48 Matt Cook, 'London, AIDS and the 1980s', in Simon Avery and Katherine M. Graham (eds), *Sex, Time and Place – Queer Histories of London, c. 1850 to the Present* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), pp. 185-202.

49 Johan Andersson, 'Homonormative aesthetics: AIDS and 'de-generational unremembering' in 1990s London', *Urban Studies* 56.14 (2019) p. 2993.

50 Elena Kiesling, 'The Missing Colors of the Rainbow: Black Queer Resistance', *European Journal of American Studies* 11.3, doc 13 (2017), p.1.

51 Bell and Binnie, 'Authenticating Queer Space: Citizenship, Urbanism and Governance', pp. 1815-1816.

52 Andersson, 'Homonormative aesthetics', p. 8.

53 Andersson, 'Homonormative aesthetics', p. 15.

IS SOHO QUEER? THE CONFLICTING EFFECTS OF LEGITIMISATION

Soho exists today as a pleasure economy of entertainment and consumption, with rainbow flags adorned in the windows of the businesses that line its streets, as Mort describes it.[54] David Bell and Jon Binnie argue that 'many "gay" consumption spaces are bounded communities, where processes of exclusion operate, for instance on the basis of race and gender. However, boundaries can be seen as necessary, to keep "unwanted others" out'; which eliminates possible hostilities regarding the safety, scrutiny and acceptance of marginalized queer individuals and groups within a queer space.[55] Yet, as a result of neoliberal consumerism and the pink pound, institutions of which Soho thrives on, the screening of unwanted others has is forgone. Tourism and mainstreaming of gay culture have allowed for 'unwanted others' to 'infiltrate' the gay spaces of Soho, pushing sexual minorities out as a result of distaste and feeling uncomfortable or unsafe in their own spaces. A major topic of debate here has been that of straights, primarily groups of women in hen parties, establishing a space within Soho. Although this does provide homosexual culture with a greater visibility in the public eye, it has brought on the sanitation and purification of queer space on the terms of heteronormativity.[56] This gentrification of space 'has driven the less-assimilated queers underground, back into subterranean, back-street bars and cruising grounds.'[57] Moreover, an inflated pleasure economy has furthermore made the establishments of Soho greatly inaccessible to many sexual minorities of the city regarding costs and affordability of the establishments it hosts. Additionally, high rent costs and affordability issues have struck the community's venues, as well as other venues scattered around the city. A recent study of queer nighttime spaces completed by UCL evidenced that 58% of LGBTQIA+ licenced venues have closed in the past decade, two of Soho's long standing venues, Candy Bar – a bar catered to women – and Madam Jojo's, are most notable.[58] Most significant in their research is the severe disparity of venues dedicated women, POC, transgender and queer identities.

However, trans-inclusive venues and parties have always existed in London. Due to processes of gentrification and exclusion, many of these established events have been taken to East London, mainly in the areas of Hackney, Dalston and Shoreditch, and are constructed as temporary events and parties in existing venues and urban structures.[59] The lack of permanent establishments questions the longevity of these temporary spaces; however, they prove to show resistance and persistence. Events such as Adonis, Pxssy Palace, Crossbreed and Lazarus exude gender-fuck mentality, open sexuality, fluidity, nonconformity and queerness. Queer events like these, which reinvent space and reconstruct norms of identity, gender and sexuality, could be examined further as a model for the future production of queer spaces. Their non-permanent nature might on one hand disrupt the development of a longer-term sense of belonging, while at the same time might create conditions of resilience; the ephemerality of such spaces might welcome change, adaptability and negotiation regarding the norms.

54 Mort, 'Cityscapes', pp. 893-899.

55 Bell and Binnie, 'Authenticating', p. 1811.

56 Scott E. Branton and Cristin A. Compton, 'There's No Such Thing as a Gay Bar: Co-Sexuality and the Neoliberal Branding of Queer Spaces', *Management Communication Quarterly*, 35.1 (2021), pp. 69–95 (p. 57).

57 Bell and Binnie, 'Authenticating', p. 1810.

58 Campkin and Marshall, *LGBTQ+*, p. 6.

59 Ibid.

Shim Sham Club was a renowned destination of queer excellence in the 1930s. The club closed, yet years later was opened again as a temporary event in South London:

> The Promoter agreed, but once the space was filled with drag queens, butches, femmes, dykes, twins, it became very clear that they loved the idea of the space but only when they weren't there. In their minds we are all white men in classic drag and dishing out snappy one-liners. We are not women, we are not people of color, we are not trans and we are certainly not supposed to be hooking up with each other or simply chilling with our friends. We are only 'fun' when they don't have to engage with us as three-dimensional human beings. The diversity of our community is invisible to them and they don't want to see it.[60]

Since the 1980s and 90s, media have described Soho as being queer, and maintain this argument still today. Conversely, it remains vividly clear that the venue owners of the neighbourhood are branded as inherently homosexual, attracting a majority clientele of white, young, gay, middle-class men. As Andersson concisely argues, 'these terms are not mutually exclusive, but whereas queer, which was used to reclaim some of the wounded aspects of sexual minority experience – at least as a poststructuralist critique deconstructs binaries such as hetero/homo and male/female, gay exists in opposition of heteronormativity, but reiterates these dichotomies.'[61] As a result of these political institutions, as Lawrence Knopp warns, the homogenizing of these spaces in the form of gay ghettos or gay villages run on bases of exclusion that force other queer identities and minorities within the LGBTQIA+ community to exist elsewhere in other underground or less permanent spaces – the term queer, in this context, is constantly evolving to express the non-normalised and supressed identities, that perform on the periphery of the 'legitimised' and often commodified places.[62]

Duggan's definition of queer community and queer theory comes with an interesting take; however, it is not to say that it is without flaw or in need of transgression. They explain that queer communities are used to construct a collectivity of unity that is no longer defined exclusively by the gender of its members, rather by shared exclusions of sexuality and gender. Although a significant recognition, queer communities and queer theory in this sense still ignore exclusionary processes and fail to incorporate other sexual minorities and other identities we may describe as queer today. Though this statement is transgressive in some sense, this failed opportunity to delve deeper into intersectional issues regarding 'deviant' sexual performances, race, class, ability and age further perpetuate hetero/homonormative dichotomies.

In a paper discussing the role of the queer anarchist and radical queer theory, Sandra Jeppesen lists 'sleaze, perversion, deviance, eccentricity, weirdness, kinkiness, BDSM, and smut' as synonymous with radical queer values.[63] As evidenced by the proclamation of the white gay man as the poster boy of queerness during the AIDS crisis, queer activism generally has failed to include sexual and gender dissidents, as well as other minoritised identities within its dialogue and in turn, 'reinscribes a homonormative subject complicit with capitalism, racism, environmental destruction, ableism, patriarchy, beauty myths and so on.'[64] Jeppesen goes on to define the queer anarchist as 'considering all consensual, non-coerced intimacies and sexualities legitimate, challenging homonormativity via anti-oppression politics,' while intersecting issues of gender divisions, sexual orientation, class and ethnicity.

60 Chardine Taylor-Stone, 'They Only Want Us When We Are Not There', *Urban Pamphleteer.* (2018), pp. 17-18.. Available at: http://urbanpamphleteer.org/lgbtq-night-time-spaces-past-present-future (Accessed 19th June 2023).

61 Andersson, 'Homonormative aesthetics: AIDS and 'de-generational unremembering' in 1990s London', p. 3002.

62 Knopp, 'Sexuality and Urban Space: A Framework of Analysis', pp. 149-164.

63 Sandra Jeppesen, 'Queer anarchist autonomous zones and publics: Direct action vomiting against homonormative consumerism', *Sexualities* 13.4 (2010), pp. 463-478.

64 Ibid.

Taking this a step even further, the introduction of race theory into queer radicalism and queer anarchism strengthens relationships of identities. The proclamation of whiteness as the embodiment of queer aesthetics, as previously mentioned, questions the authenticity of queerness surrounding black bodies, further perpetuating the stereotype that black signifies heterosexuality, questioning the authenticity of same sex black relationships. Elena Kiesling questions what happens to the black experience when black is inherently referred to as the antithesis of queer, the erasure of black bodies from queer activism and queer neighbourhoods while queer bodies are seen as a sign of progress and safety. The inclusion of blackness and queerness, with a focus on racialized inequalities, queerness, then, becomes a critical stance of power for marginalized identities, the most marginalized being trans black women. Reflecting on the earlier mentioned question on queering places, an emerging question regards the evolving performances that may not have been yet observed or theorised, and which queer spaces in new ways, and by new groups and identities. Performances of other race, transgender, and underrepresented identities queering places in emerging and not-yet-standardised ways may be leaving them outside our visible field.

65 Aaron Betsky, *Queer Space: architecture and same-sex desire* (London: William Morrow & Co, 1997), p. 5.

66 Oswin, 'Critical geographies', pp. 90-92.

CONCLUSION

Reflecting on the earlier question 'Is Soho queer?', a possible answer could be 'not quite'. By queer, we mean ever-changing non-normative identities; and by queer space, we mean the place that hosts and allows disruptive and transformative processes to emerge. It is clear however that throughout histories of queer performance and normative transgressions, Soho did exist as a queer space at points in time. Although there are elements of queerness in Soho today, and of course there are queer demonstrations and bodies that live there, Soho simply functions atop heteronormative and homonormative political structure, which queerness explicitly opposes. According to Aaron Betsky:

> Queer space exists as a space for orgasm or pleasure. There is no architecture or planning of queer space. It does not have an order or an identifier. A flag does not create a queer space. Much like there are no physical attributes to being queer or homosexual. These stereotypes are inaccurate, and less accurate as progress is being made. The body dissolves into the world and your senses smooth all reality into a continuous wave of pleasure – you are happy and vulnerable because your vulnerability comes from the centre of your existence and experience.[65]

This study also observed the subsequent displacements of 'queer' spaces, happening alongside other types of displacement; gentrification, in the sense of physically moving the actual performative spaces outside the city centre, or their former places, and replacing them with a simulation or symbolic, gestural representation of inclusivity and otherness. The friction, the 'peripheral' and 'deviant' nature of places was the very fact that was rendering them in some sense 'safe'. As architects and designers, we sometimes overlook the power of the 'in-between', contested, negotiable, ephemeral spaces and their paradoxical nature.

It is often in this in-between that some type of freedom is found and negotiated. This in-between is first observed as spatial; one space next to another and room for the 'different' in between. However, the in-between is also often temporal; between one situation and established use of a space and another. In the case of Soho, and similarly other places in other cities, the queerness, or the freedom experienced in a space, was over a certain period of time; it was a transitional space in that respect, an in-between. What is deviant/'allowed'/ normative or not has been associated mainly with the 'queer' in this article. However, we wish for the reader to reflect also on other manifestations of difference, protest, non-normative inhabiting of places in the context of the above conversations.

It must be reinstated that shame is not the cause of production of queer spaces, as some in queer theory might think. Queer space, queer bodies, queer anarchy and queer identities are performances of resistance and transgression against shame birthed from the heteronormative and hegemonic structures sourced of marginality and exclusion.[66] The way in which queer places are at times commodified and portrayed in the neoliberal city, or associated with an image – or illusion – of acceptance, or even spectacle, are obviously counterproductive, as they contradict the inherently disruptive nature of the debate on the 'otherness'. The analysis and study of these cultural performances, through the lens of radical queer activism and queer anarchy, are imperative in the production and maintenance of queer space, therefore maintaining intersectional spaces of acceptance and safety regarding sexuality, gender, race, class, ability and age.

This article aims at queering space by navigating through stories, by observing and questioning. It raises open questions on how emerging performances and actions can shape places and potentially disrupt normative assumptions. It associates the displacement of the queer with the displacements of other 'othernesses'. And it navigates through the in-between places in the city – spatially and temporally – and examines their nature as fractures/gaps that allow the deviant and the norm-challenging to happen.

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EILE'S FICTION ECOLOGIES: EXPLORING A PRAXIS TOWARDS THE DISRUPTION OF BORDER-IMPERIALISM

Paula McCloskey & Sam Vardy

ABSTRACT

Eile (meaning Other in Irish) is a long-term, transdisciplinary art and spatial practice that critically intervenes in the political, spatial, subjective and ecological spaces of the UK state border on the island of Ireland. It centres on the titular figure Eile, who is imagined as an otherworldly creature of the border. Eile is a transmuter; a shapeshifter; a lobster, a banshee, a flow of water, a gush of wind, who moves in and across the border(lands)through time and space. Through practices of performance, film, sculpture, sound and writing, Eile generates and explores alternative alliances of creatures, flora, fauna and folklore, through a distinct form of *fictioning/s*, which we call *border fictioning/s*. In so doing, the aim of Eile is to generate and elucidate alternative imaginaries, epistemes and ontologies of the border in Ireland challenge the inevitability of nation-state borders.

This paper offers reflection and analysis of an exhibition of this work, Eile{Border Fictioning} that we (a place of their own) held at Bloc Projects in Sheffield, UK, in 2022. It does so, to reflect on a new emergent aspect of thispraxis, which is concerned with how this historical, experiential and speculative work holds multiplicity and difference together in various ways to evoke multiple *ecologies*, and subsequently how an important aspect of the anti-colonial praxis of border fictioning is the production of multiple *fiction ecologies* in the work.

Figure 1 a place of their own, Eile / Bog, still from HD Film with audio

INTRODUCTION

Since 2011, through our collaborative art and spatial research practice 'a place of their own', we have engaged in research on the border in Ireland. As part of the ongoing dominance of British colonialism in Ireland (which started over 800 years ago), Britain partitioned Ireland in the 1920s, and in doing so created Northern Ireland, as part of the United Kingdom, and the Republic of Ireland. This article focuses on our art and spatial practice research, entitled *Eile* (meaning "other" in Irish), which began in 2016 as an investigation into the aesthetics, subjectivities, folklore and politics of the border in Ireland, produced through site-responsive performances, films and sound works, texts, installations and assemblages. More specifically, this article functions as a reflection and analysis of an exhibition of this work – Eile {Border-Fictioning} that we held at Bloc Projects in Sheffield, UK, in 2022.

The aim of the Eile research is to create a range of 'fictions' (that we explore below), which critically intervene in the political, spatial, subjective and ecological spaces of the sovereign border in Ireland. The linchpin of Eile is the creation of the titular figure Eile, whom we have imagined as an otherworldly creature of the border, capable of transforming into different forms. The character of Eile is performed by Paula McCloskey (who is from the border in Ireland) and is imagined as a transmuter, a shapeshifter, who moves in and across the border(lands) through time and space. The fictions we create start with Paula's performances as Eile, which initially take place on various sites along the border itself. From these performances, which are recorded, we make films, sound work, installations and texts. In so doing, as practice research, Eile generates and explores alternative alliances of creatures, flora, fauna and folklore, through a distinct form of fictioning/s, which we call *border fictioning/s*.

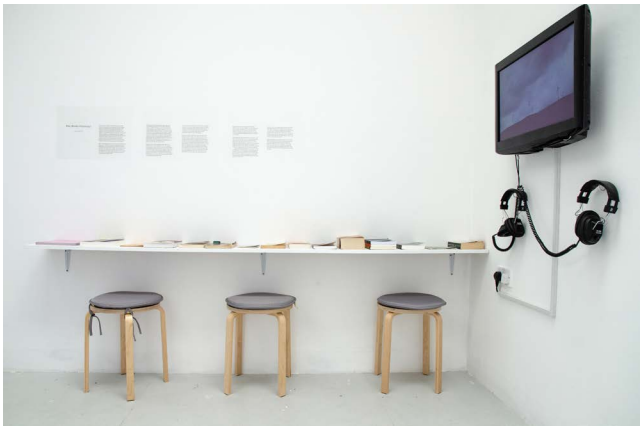


Figure 2 Exhibition room 1, references and story, Eile (Border Fictioning) at Bloc Projects, Sheffield, June 2022.

Figure 3 a place of their own, early border fictioning 'experiment', Irish/UK border, 2017

Figure 4 Paula preparing for on-site performance at Grandmothers house, Enniskillen, 2016.

Figure 5 Installation view 1, at exhibition Eile (Border Fictioning) at Bloc Projects, Sheffield, June 2022.

BORDER FICTIONINGS

Our Eile research is ongoing; it has been thirteen years since our first border field trip which would help us develop the idea for the project.[1] Since then, we developed the character of Eile as performed by Paula, and the different fictions articulated through various embodied performances and in the films, sound work, writings, sculptures and installation we have made over the years. We decided early on that Eile would mostly appear as humanoid, but would be 'otherworldly', with an alien-like aesthetic. In the performances and films discussed below, Eile is often seen dressed in silver, with flowing white hair (see fig 1). We imagine that Eile can also change into other forms, such as a lobster, a gust of wind, a flow of water, which is suggested in films. The initial site-specific performances take place on different border sites, for example on a bog on Slieve Rushen (a mountain which straddles the border in County Cavan); at an abandoned Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) border barracks in Belleek; and on the coast (at Ballyshannon and near Omeath).[2] Paula, in the character of Eile, performs ritualistic acts on the border using diverse materials such as earth and other organic matter, seaweed, wires, string and purple glitter. These ritualistic performances include acts such as weaving neon string around a tree, sprinkling glittery dust on the decaying concrete at the former barracks, and creating sculptural forms on a peatbog. The performances are filmed and made into short digital films (*The Territories of Eile* [2017]; *Eile / Lobster* [2019]; and *Eile / Bog* [2022]).

The films use a 'cut-up' approach in which footage of the performances is 'cut' with other footage (including for example archive footage of British soldiers stationed on the border shortly after partition in 1922, and found footage such as that exploring the fishing industry off the Irish coast) and collected sonic field recordings from the border (e.g river sounds, wind, bird song) and found audio recordings (e.g. sounds from NASA of Saturn's radio waves, and underwater sound recordings of lobsters). These audiovisual films, individually and collectively, alongside various poetry, prose, sculptures and images, serve to collectively create what we call border fictions.

Through the fictionings (process of making the fictions) of Eile we propose a re-imagining of the border in Ireland.[3] The importance of the imagination, as Lola Olufemi suggests, is that it 'not only creates liberatory drives; it sustains, justifies and legitimises them. It undoes entire epistemes and clears space for us to create something new.'[4] The Eile research is thus an exploration of the potential of fictionings specifically in the re-imagining of the border in Ireland, and more generally it is proposed as a way to disrupt or challenge the global hegemony of sovereign borders. Harsha Walia's investigation meticulously sets out how the establishment and ongoing maintenance of sovereign borders around the world thrives on the suffering of people on the move or displaced peoples.[5] In her analysis of nation-state borders, Walia proposes the term border imperialism to shift our focus away from the comprehension of borders as lines demarcating territory, to the constantly shifting 'regime of practices, institutions, discourse, and systems' that is structurally caught in anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism and deeply enmeshed in relations to capitalism – and that these, in fact, define this regime.[6]

1 This experiment took place in May 2011, and involved five members of a place of their own (two adults and three children) driving and walking along an 80km stretch of the border from Muff to Pettigo in County Donegal.

2 From 2005, the once 'hard border' in Ireland with its watch towers, army checkpoints and barracks became, for the most part invisible, with little or no physical infrastructure. The state border still exists, but the physical security whether that be buildings, walls, barbed wires, boulders, or other paraphernalia such cameras, have been removed, dismantled or abandoned (such as the barracks to which we gained entry) due to processes put in place by the Good Friday Agreement (or Belfast Agreement) 1998.

3 We make the distinction between fiction (noun) and fictioning (verb) following the lead of David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan (2019) work on fictions in visual culture. They explore the critical function of fictioning in creative practice and philosophy as a mode of making, writing and thinking.

4 Lola Olufemi, *Experiments in Imagining Otherwise* (Maidstone: Hajar Press, 2021), p. 34.

5 Harsha Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism* (Oakland, CA : Washington, D.C: AK Press, 2013) and Harsha Walia, *Border and Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021).

6 Walia, *Undoing Border Imperialism*, p. 38.

The emergence of the notion of border fictions and border fictionings took some time. Our research is practice-led so we were guided by (and responsive to) the various performances and films etc. that we have made over the years – a protracted process and an experimental, iterative praxis. Settling (more or less) on the term border fiction as a phenomenon and border fictioning as method was always tentative. We are also mindful of the problematics of 'naming' or 'coining' concepts and phenomena since 'language has always been the consort of empire, and forever shall remain its mate.'[7] We are also mindful of the potential challenges and dangers of 'fictioning' in this context. We therefore approach the concept, phenomenon and method with caution, care and criticality and in the hope, as it has proved useful to our thinking, that by sharing it, we might tentatively open up discussion, debate and collective sense-making around the challenges and generative potential. In this sharing we have moved from fiction/ing (singular) to border fictions/ings (plural) to intentionally indicate and invite other practices and thinking of border fictions/ing/s.

The notion of border fictionings, critically approached, is proposed as a way to explore existent hegemonic border imaginaries, and an invitation to create new or alternate ones. We propose this critical functioning or the potential of fictionings in Eile, and beyond, as a tactic in the ongoing work to disrupt and undo the border imperialist imaginary.

Having introduced and explored the complex antecedents and genealogy of border fictionings elsewhere, it is not our intention to elaborate on it further here.[8] We hope instead, through a reflection and analysis of an exhibition of this work (Eile {Border-Fictioning} that we held at Bloc Projects in Sheffield, UK, in 2022) to reflect on a new emergent aspect of the praxis. This is concerned with how this historical, experiential and speculative work holds multiplicity and difference together in various ways to evoke *ecologies*, through what we develop in this analysis as *fiction ecologies*.

FICTION ECOLOGIES

Through Eile as research, we associate an ecologies framework with fictioning to create various fiction ecologies across the work. By working in this way, Eile has become a way to pay attention to the entanglements of border imperialism as well as to capitalism and the environmental crisis. It highlights how the creations of fictions prop up and reify the world we know, as well as holding the potential to undo and disrupt this world in the pursuit of creating worlds to become.

The concept of ecologies (plural) has been critically expanded across a number of different theoretical, political, as well as environmental discourses. When considering ecologies in the context of border fictionings, we include the accepted notion of ecology (singular) as the complex interrelations and interdependencies of the systems of the earth which include animals, insects, plants, aquatic creatures, humans, bogs, soil, trees and birds, and the multiple crises that these ecosystems face through biodiversity loss, environmental poverty, inequality and climate change. We then draw inspiration from Felix Guattari's call in *The Three Ecologies* for both subjective and social ecologies.[9] These provide avenues to resist the erosion of social relations and the withering of our subjectivities by capitalism. We also draw upon queer ecologies which offer a counterpoint to the imperialist ecologies that centre on the 'Man'.[10] Finally, we turn to decolonial ecologies, as explored by Malcolm Ferdinand.[11]

7 Antonio de Nebrija in 1492, cited by Robert Phillipson, 'Linguistic Imperialism', *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics,* (2018) <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal0718.pub2>.

8 See forthcoming (2024) special issue of *Architecture and Culture* journal, on the theme of 'Border Fictions', which we are editing with Dr Mohamad Hafeda.

9 Felix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, New Edition (London: Continuum, 2008), itself indebted to Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

Considering the notion of ecologies through a specifically Caribbean geography – his birthplace – Ferdinand highlights the impossibility of separating the ecological and climate crisis from the crisis of racialised inequality. He posits that the social and political dimensions are central to invoking ecologies as critique, framework and strategy.[12]

Border imperialism has its own ecological impact. A hostile irony of the global border regime is that many of the countries most affecting climate change, and thus creating displacement of people, are building the most walls.[13] These material, spatial and technological borders exert violence on the people who attempt to cross them and on the ecosystems that they cut through; killing animals, blocking migration routes and preventing access to habitat and resources. Furthermore, the prioritisation of nation-state interests that sovereign borders require and encourage make international agreements to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss difficult, as we see regularly in the lack of any significant outcomes of the annual COP summits.[14] Finally, though land dispossession is intensified by the effects of climate change (which displaces an average of 25.3 million people annually with up to 1 billion people to be displaced globally by 2050), those fleeing from climate change disasters cannot find refuge as the UN refugee convention does not recognise climate displacement.[15] This illustrates that 'our era's migration crisis is not marked by human mobility but rather the reality of mass displacement and immobility, produced by the multifarious and interwoven systems of globalised capitalism, imperialism, and climate catastrophe.'[16]

Ferdinand frames these impacts on the earth, humans and non-human life through the notion of the 'inhabitation', which is fundamentally relational, describing the relations of peoples to the land, water, and to others. Border imperialism, augmented by racialised capitalism, enacts a specific mode of such, a 'colonial inhabitation of the earth.'[17] This form of inhabitation radically imposed itself in the European colonisation of the Americas from the fifteenth century and is built on the exploitation of the land, on land-grabbing, the notion of private property and the exploitation of life, both human and non-human. Colonial inhabitation therefore defines a relational imaginary based on separation, exploitation and xenophobia, or othercide – one that 'doesn't recognise the other as a co-habitant of the earth.'[18]

10 Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

As explained by Sylvia Wynter in 'Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument', *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 3.3 (2003), pp. 257–337, and building on the work of Franz Fanon, 'Man' (white European) as a category came to stand in for human; and for Rosi Braidotti 'Man' is: 'male, white, heterosexual, owning wives and children, urbanised, able-bodied, speaking a standard language, i.e. "Man."' Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019).

11 Malcolm Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World*, trans. by Anthony Paul Smith (Cambridge: Polity, 2021).

12 'Decolonial Ecologies', *The Funambulist*, June 2021 <https://thefunambulist.net/magazine/decolonial-ecologies> [accessed 8 March 2024].

13 Reece Jones, 'It's Time to Rethink the Relationship Between Borders and Climate Change', *Undark Magazine*, 2017 <https://undark.org/2017/11/07/borders-climate-change-displacement/> [accessed 4 March 2024].

14 Reece Jones, and Achille Mbembe, 'Bodies as Borders', *From The European South - a Transdisciplinary Journal of Postcolonial Humanities*, 4.0 (2019), 5–18. The UN Climate Change Conference (the official name for Climate Conferences of the Parties) have taken place every year since 1995. These two-week summits see world leaders, politicians, experts and others discussing the climate crisis on a global level.

15 Walia, *Border and Rule*, p. 73; 74.

16 Walia, *Border and Rule*, p. 74.

17 Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology*, p. 26-27.

18 Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology*, p. 22.

To undo border imperialism means to straddle the colonial and environmental 'double fracture' that Ferdinand identifies, and regard it as both a colonial, racist crisis and a huMan-made environmental and ecological crisis.[19] The dismantling of sovereign borders and the border imperialism that underpins them (and their associated imaginaries) is therefore a fundamental part of interconnected global struggles for decolonisation and racial justice, ecological struggles and environmental justice.

In the following pages, we attempt to capture something of this ecological framework in our practice research Eile, through commentary on selected components of the work that was shared in the 2022 exhibition, and the relations, interdependencies and alliances into which they were curated.

THE EXHIBITION/ INSTALLATION

The Eile {Border Fictioning} exhibition at Bloc Projects in 2022 was conceived as an assemblage of multiple aspects of the Eile research. It occupied two spaces of the gallery building, the first of which was a small bright foyer in which we placed different items contextualising the project. As visitors entered the gallery they were greeted by a text printed on the wall, setting up the story of Eile, a snapshot of an imperfect, partial origin story of sorts; a weaving of words which intentionally disrupted the 'real' and fiction, the personal and political, the self and other, human and non-human from the outset, thus setting a tone for the whole (fig 2). This story was also included in a book we produced, Eile {Border Fictioning}, which also includes photographs of our early fictioning experiments on the border with our four children (fig 3). Another photograph shows Paula preparing for a border performance in her grandmother's home in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland (fig 4). This book sits on a shelf amongst a set of other books which narrate our thinking in developing the world-building of Eile, including writings by Harsha Walia, Octavia Butler, Samuel Delaney, Samuel Beckett, Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Sylvia Wynter, Simon O'Sullivan and David Burrows, Malcolm Ferdinand, and Lola Olufemi.

Visitors then walked through a thick curtain to enter an installation that filled the main gallery space (figs 5 and 6) – an immersive world of Eile, with magenta light streaming in from the skylight and windows. The whole space glowed. Sound filled the space: an array of sounds (field recordings of the border – wind turbines, rivers – sounds of Saturn's radio emissions, of oceanic decapods, metallic drones) overlayed with a woman's voice performing a poem written by us, in Irish and English. These overlapping sounds played on a continuous loop; a crucial component of the spatial and experiential design of the installation.

Figure 6 installation view 2, at exhibition Eile (Border Fictioning) at Bloc Projects, Sheffield, June 2022.

19 'huMan' is used here in recognition that colonialism and the climate crises are not caused by all humans, equally. This is based on the thinking, for example, of Sylvia Wynter (cited in note 11 above); that 'Man' (white, European) as a category came to stand in for 'human'.

Figure 7 installation view 3, at exhibition Eile (Border Fictioning) at Bloc Projects, Sheffield, June 2022.

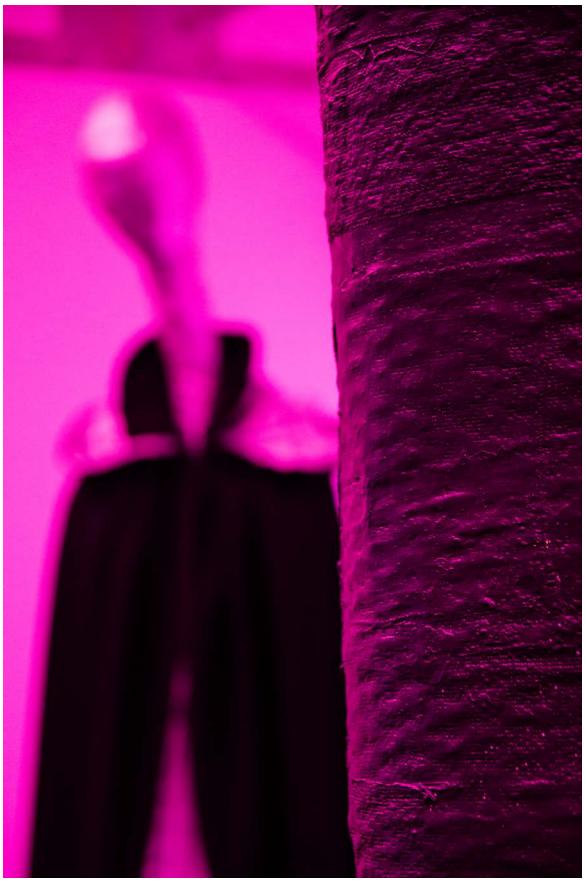
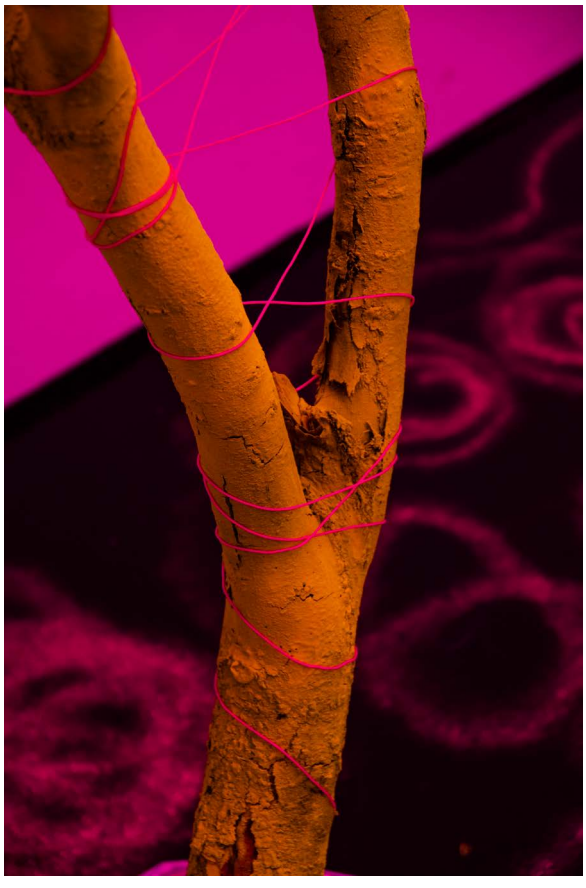


Figure 8 installation view 4, at exhibition Eile (Border Fictioning) at Bloc Projects, Sheffield, June 2022.



The installation included three films (on four screens), a digital image (fig 9), a video clip of a White Cryptic butterfly projected on a suspended, fine, flowing fabric (seen in fig 5), a 'tree sculpture' of neon yellow with string (seen in figs 5 and 8), a large floating black 'portal sculpture' (seen in figs 5, 6, 7), and an eight foot sculpture of Eile (seen in figs 5 and 7). The latter has an elongated metallic neck and head emerging from a bespoke interpretation of the Kinsale cloak (fig 7).[20] On the opening night, a live performance by Paula took place in the space of the installation, which mimicked the ritualistic performances on the border seen in two of the films: *The Territories of Eile* (glitter ritual) and *Eile / Bog* (tree string ritual). Cutting a slight figure in silver and alien-like form with long white hair, the performance included knotting and looping neon pink yarn onto the installed tree branches; creating spiral glittery forms on the ground surrounding the tree in a complex dance of call and response, choreographed to the installation sound work. The traces and remnants of this performance then became part of the installation (fig 8).

In curating these diverse objects, many of which are already complex assemblages, into an exhibition, the site(s) and territories of Eile shifted from the border, where the original embodied performances took place, via the virtual border territories of the digital audiovisual films, to the specific ecologies evoked in the space of the gallery itself. We also acknowledged that it was a significant moment in the emergence of the utility of fiction ecologies in our work.

20 The cloak designed and made as part of the *Eile* sculpture references the traditional Kinsale Cloak, as depicted in this painting *Women of Kinsale* (1978) by Patrick Hennessy. Worn by both men and women in South-West Ireland used as an essential item of clothing and warmth (as a blanket), and typically made from the wool of the black sheep common in the area. In our sculpture the lining is metallic silver and from the cloak protrudes the long silver neck of a version of Eile the character.

Figure 9 a place of their own, Eile (Border Fictioning), installation detail, 2022, Bloc Projects, Sheffield, UK.

Figure 9 is an image still from the film *Eile / Lobster*, where Eile can be seen playing cat's cradle with a child-like Eile companion, in what appears to be outer space. Eile is performed by the mother, and the younger figure is performed by the daughter. In the installation, this image is repeated multiple times vertically on the wall, from the floor to the ceiling, resembling a length of 35mm film reel, but the image on each 'frame' is identical. Repeated over and over, the images conjure, as Gilles Deleuze explored, repetition as difference.[21] This game of string figures and patterns between the players is used in Eile as a way to explore how we come to 'know' borders; nation-state borders as fictions themselves, and contemplating what the introduction of fictionings-as-method might do to this knowledge to disrupt hegemonic understandings of borders.

Cat's cradle has been associated with feminist philosophers Isabelle Stengers and Donna Haraway, but the origins of the game are trickier to pin-point.[22] For Haraway, cat's cradle is used to enact multispecies reciprocity in storytelling:

> Cat's cradle is about patterns and knots; the game takes great skill and can result in some serious surprises. One person can build up a large repertoire of string figures on a single pair of hands; but the cat's cradle figures can be passed back and forth on the hands of several players, who add new moves in the building of complex patterns.[23]

Haraway's notion of string figures (or 'SF' – encompassing science fiction, science fact, speculative feminism, speculative fabulation and so on) is important as it proposes imaginative patterns of thinking with which to approach an ecologies praxis.[24] The game of cat's cradle in Eile is a nod to this thinking, and is used to explore the many human and more-than-human fictions and non-fictions of nation-state borders. Specifically, it forms part of the fictionings of the border in Eile, interweaving the notion that nation-state borders are themselves fictions, as well as enacting alternate border fictionings across the praxis.

21 Deleuze, *Difference*.

22 Isabelle Stengers, 'Relaying a War Machine', in *The Guattari Effect* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), pp. 134–55; Donna Haraway, 'A Game of Cat's Cradle: Science Studies, Feminist Theory, Cultural Studies', *Configurations*, 2.1 (1994), pp. 59–71 <https://doi.org/10.1353/con.1994.0009>.

23 Haraway, 'A Game', pp. 69-70.

24 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

25 Catriona Sandilands, 'The Marginal World', in *Every Grain of Sand: Canadian Perspectives on Ecology and Environment* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 2004), pp. 45–54.

Figure 10 a place of their own, Eile / Lobster, still from HD Film with audio, 11'27", 2019.

Figure 10 is a still from the film *Eile / Lobster,* a short film which began with a performance on two coastal border sites, one near Ballyshannon, County Donegal (where Paula is from) and another near Omeath, County Louth. Situating this performance on the coast is an intentional affront to hegemonic border spatial and material imaginaries that posit borders as fixed lines on a map or walls across the earth. The coast is a liminal space, constantly in flux; between land and sea; with each continually transforming one another.[25] Such spatial conditions, of transition between ecological communities, ecosystems, or ecological regions have been termed 'ecotones'.[26] Astrid Neimanis, as part of her work on Hydrofeminism, writes that ecotones:

> might be considered markers of connection and/or separation, but in ecological terms, they are zones of fecundity, creativity, transformation, multiplication, divergence, and reassembly […] [where] Any difference between 'thing' and 'process', or 'verb' and 'noun', or 'body' and 'becoming' also blurs.[27]

In the film, *Eile / Lobster* (as across the entire Eile practice research) there is an ongoing play with natureculture as defined by Donna Haraway: the notion that nature and culture are not dualities but enmeshed, entangled and mutually constitutive.[28] Natureculture has implications for thinking with border fiction ecologies as: 'natureculture is a synthesis of nature and culture that recognizes their inseparability in ecological relationships that are both biophysically and socially formed.'[29]

In the film *Eile / Lobster*, Eile is transformed into water, temporarily discarding their humanoid figure, to become-water. Neimanis tells us that humans are all bodies of water, and as such already and always more-than-human: 'I am a body of water, as are you, as is a river, a snow squall, a walrus, a tamarind tree.'[30] Eile's watery body morphs into a creature of the sea, a marine crustacean, a lobster. This too is a moment that enacts natureculture. Lobsters are ancient beasts, having been around some 350 million years.[31] Lobsters live in the mud and murk at the bottom of the sea. Scuttling in the watery depths, five pairs of their legs have claws. Once considered 'poor man's food,' lobsters are now valued as seafood and have become profitable commodities. They are also loaded with cultural coding. Think of Samuel Beckett's 1934 short story *Dante and the Lobster*, Salvador Dalí's *Lobster Telephone 1938*, and Yorgos Lanthimos absurdist science fiction film, *The Lobster*, 2015:

> *Everything was all set now and in order. Bating, of course, the lobster, which had to remain an incalculable factor.*[32]

> *Hotel Manager : Now have you thought of what animal you'd like to be if you end up alone?*
>
> *David :Yes. A lobster.*
>
> *Hotel Manager :Why a lobster?*
>
> *David : Because lobsters live for over one hundred years, are blue-blooded like aristocrats, and stay fertile all their lives. I also like the sea very much.* [33]

26 Salit Kark, 'Ecotones and *Ecological Gradients', in Ecological Systems: Selected Entries from the Encyclopedia of Sustainability Science and Technology*, ed. by Rik Leemans (New York, NY: Springer, 2013), pp. 147–60 <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-5755-8_9>.

27 Sarah Bezan and Astrida Neimanis, 'Hydrofeminism on the Coastline: An Interview with Astrida Neimanis', *Anthropocenes – Human, Inhuman, Posthuman*, 3.1 (2022) <https://doi.org/10.16997/ahip.1363>.

28 Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Cambridge: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003).

29 Nicholas Malone and Kathryn Ovenden, 'Natureculture', in *The International Encyclopedia of Primatology* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2016), pp. 1–2 <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119179313.wbprim0135>.

30 Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 86.

31 Heather D Bracken-Grissom, Shane T. Ahyong, Richard D. Wilkinson, Rodney M. Feldmann, Carrie E. Schweitzer, Jesse W. Breinholt, and others, 'The Emergence of Lobsters: Phylogenetic Relationships, Morphological Evolution and Divergence Time Comparisons of an Ancient Group (Decapoda: Achelata, Astacidea, Glypheidea, Polychelida)', *Systematic Biology*, 63.4 (2014), pp. 457–79 <https://doi.org/10.1093/sysbio/syu008>.

32 Samuel Beckett, *Dante and the Lobster* (London: Faber & Faber, 1934).

33 *The Lobster*, dir. by Yorgos Lanthimos (Film4, Bord Scannán na hÉireann / The Irish Film Board, Eurimages, 2015).

Figure 11 a place of their own, Eile / Lobster, still from HD Film with audio, 11'27", 2019.

Importantly, the lobster is a creature of material transformation: it must lose its shell and survive unprotected while it grows a new one. This process of making itself defenceless suggests change that requires vulnerability (or what the feminist artist psychoanalyst Bracha Ettinger calls *self-fragilization*), as a way to reach empathy with the other.[34] In a time of enmeshed 'crises' – such as the border crisis (as Walia reminds us there never has been a 'migrant crisis') climate change, and capitalism – the notion of vulnerability becomes paramount.[35] It is essential for fostering connections and forming alliances, as Haraway suggests, not only with the self but also with others, both human and more-than-human.[36]

Significantly, Ettinger's theories start with an original encounter, the womb as matrix, in her development of *matrixial theory*.[37] Ettinger proposes the *matrixial borderspace* as a shared realm that connects all humans to otherness. This original matrixial encounter, where a pattern of transsubjectivity is formed, is for Ettinger a way to access an original encounter with otherness that all humans both share and have access to, which can lead to responsibility beyond empathy – a form of co-responsibility for humans and more-than-humans. This, in turn, is integral to an ecologies framework.

Thinking of the intrauterine imaginary in relation to thinking beyond-the-human has permeated our work before, suggesting that viewing the intrauterine time-space as a process experienced by all humans can enhance our understanding of 'humanness', particularly in relation to the concept of original 'inhumanness'.[38] This correspondingly might be used as part of a wider strategy to reimagine ecologies, and 'human' relations therein, as a form of sympoiesis, or 'making with', as proposed by Haraway.[39] While such an approach begins with the pre-human intrauterine experience, it can extend its consequences to reshape our understanding of what it means to be 'human' and how we could re-imagine our fragile, contingent and uneasy relationships with the non-human.[40]

Although not explicitly referenced in the Eile research and its many art-led investigations, this thinking permeates the work, manifesting specifically in the references to mother and child relations. This is seen, for example, in the use of a maternal body to perform Eile, the mother-daughter space-game of cat's cradle, in the dancing sequence of the *Eile / Lobster* film (fig 11), the presence of the grandmother (fig 4), and numerous other complex intra-actions with other 'humans', non-humans (butterflies, lobsters, banshee) and things (glitter, peatbog, technologies) as ecological relationships (ecologies).[41] Together, these elements entangle across the installation work to collectively create and conjure alternate and disruptive border imaginaries.

34 Bracha Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

35 Walia, *Border and Rule*.

36 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*.

37 Bracha Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace*.

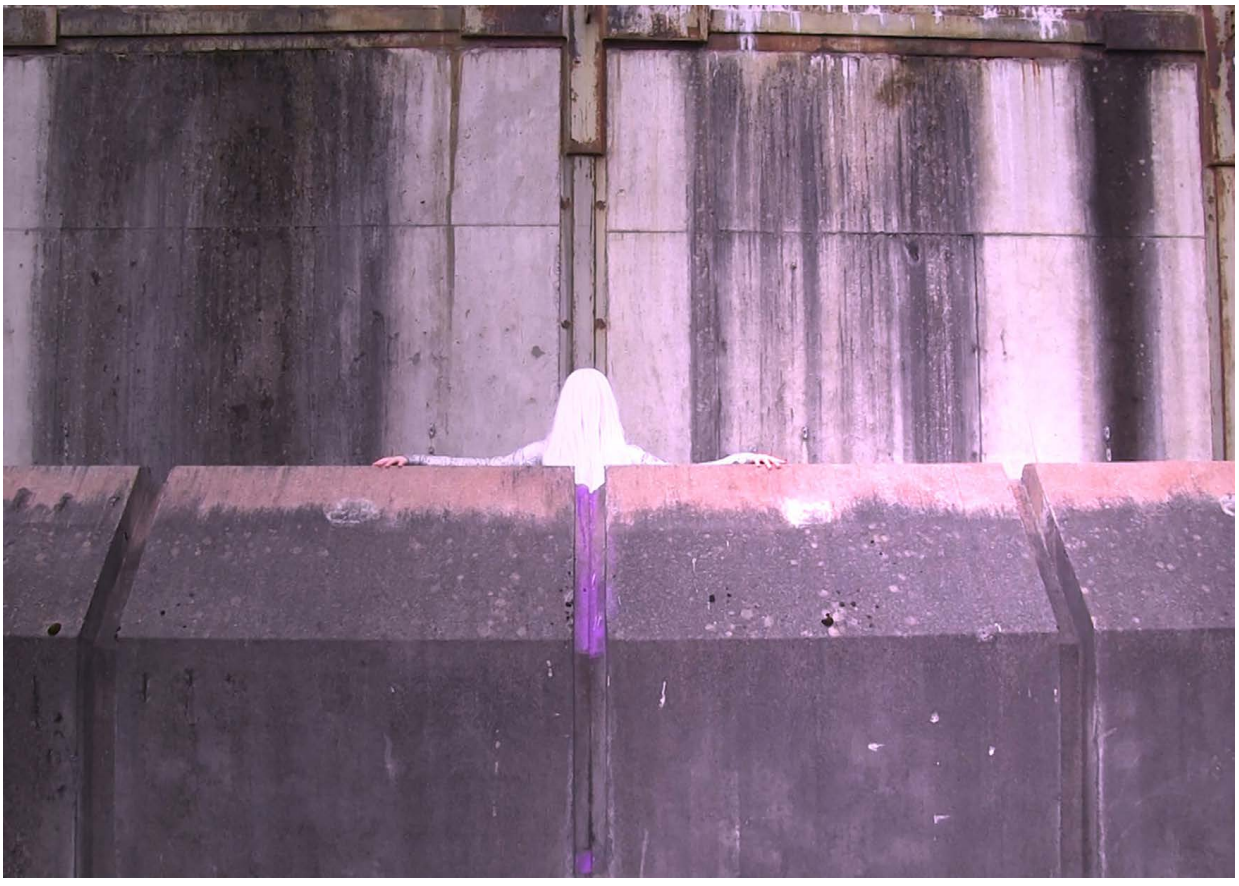
38 Paula McCloskey, 'The Non/Inhuman Within: Beyond the Biopolitical Intrauterine Imaginary', *Studies in Gender and Sexuality*, 22.3 (2021), pp. 174–91 <https://doi.org/10.1080/15240657.2021.1961494>.

39 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*.

40 McCloskey, *The Non/Inhuman Within*.

41 Karen Barad's notion (distinct from *inter*-action) of *intra*-action is where 'distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action'. Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 33.

Figure 12 a place of their own, The Territories of Eile, still from HD Film with audio, 3'55", 2017.



The Territories of Eile film (figs 12-14) is partially situated in various terrains across the Irish borderlands, along hedgerows teeming with life, on the waters of Lough Melvin (County Leitrim/County Fermanagh), and in an abandoned RUC barracks in Belleek, that sits adjacent the river through which the border runs. We first entered here a few years ago, through huge rusty corrugated gates held together loosely by a metal chain which allowed for easy access. The broken surveillance cameras looked on lifelessly, though still managed to be accusatory, as we set up for one of our first Eile performances. The high walls, cloaked in barbed wire, housed several buildings, a site of violence throughout the so-called 'Troubles'.[42] The whole site, which overlooks the river, itself a watery border (and watery body), was littered with relics from a time when this border was a 'hard' one (a reminder that borders change over time).

We still see high numbers of physical borders being built around the planet to demarcate physical territories with lofty walls and barbed wire. Increasingly though, borders are becoming digitised territories and re-made as immigrant databases, digital IDs, electronic tracking systems, facial recognition software, and data fusion centres.[43]

As Mbembe notes:

> physical and virtual barriers of separation, digitalization of databases, filing systems, the development of new tracking devices, sensors, drones, satellites and sentinel robots, infrared detectors and various other cameras, biometric controls, and new microchips containing personal details – everything is put in place to transform the very nature of the border in the name of security. Borders are increasingly turned into mobile, portable, omnipresent and ubiquitous realities.[44]

Such shifts in the practice of what Mbembe calls 'borderization' – 'a new global partitioning between potentially risky bodies vs. bodies that are not' – are part of a process that pushes, with devastating effect, borders further into bodies and other distributed spaces.[45] For Walia, it produces 'mass displacement, while immobilizing migrants through oppressive technologies that prohibit and criminalize free migration, alongside policies expanding indentured migrant labor pools, all entwined in reactionary nationalisms.'[46] These border technologies are sinister and function to prop up, prolong and reinforce colonialism as this web of technology continues to grow in sophistication and reach, through interactions or intra-actions with other technologies, politics, with organisms and with the environment.[47] This 'real' world of borders is the stuff of hegemonic science fiction, where border imperialism has historically been a common trope.[48]

In *The Territories of Eile* film, to create thresholds across space-time, we witness Eile performing a ritualistic dusting of glinting flecks (fig 13). Eile scatters these particles across the haunted structures and technological detritus. There are many rituals seen throughout the nested worldings of Eile, as a method to performatively blur and distort borders-as-real: borders-as-fictions to summon a world where borders do not exist.[49]

42 Gerry Moriarty reporting on a mortar attack on the eve of the ceasefire: 'On Good Friday a number of shots were fired at Belleek barracks. In 1994, on the eve of the ceasefire, the IRA attempted to bomb the barracks.' May 11th 1998 , *Irish Times,* https://www.irishtimes.com/news/mortar-attack-on-ruc-in-belleek-1.151238

43 Mizue Aizeki, Matt Mamoudi and Coline Schupfer (eds.), *Resisting Borders and Technologies of Violence: Resisting Borders in an Age of Global Apartheid* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2024).

44 Achille Mbembe, 'Bodies as Borders', *From The European South - a Transdisciplinary Journal of Postcolonial Humanities*, 4.0 (2019), pp. 5–18, (p. 9).

45 Mbembe, 'Bodies as Borders'.

46 Harsha Walia, *Border and Rule*, p. 17.

47 Barad, *Meeting the Universe*.

48 Paula McCloskey and Sam Vardy, 'Towards Border Fictionings', *Architecture and Culture*, 11.4 (forthcoming 2024).

49 McCloskey and Vardy, 'Towards Border Fictionings'.

Figure 13 a place of their own, The Territories of Eile,
still from HD Film with audio, 3'55", 2017.

Figure 14 a place of their own, The Territories of Eile, Triptych of the 3 component films, 3'55", 2017.

Figure 15 a place of their own, Eile/ Bog, still from HD Film with audio, 5'56", 2022.

In the *Eile / Bog* film, we see Eile on a mountainous peatbog at Slieve Rushen (fig 14) which traverses the border in Ireland, between counties Cavan and Fermanagh. The mountain is made up of grey limestone with a cap of sandstone and shales and is extensively quarried by local mining companies. The surface is mostly covered with peatbog. The mountain is a protected area of the National Park and contains several caves and swallow-holes. More recently it became home to an electricity generating wind farm.

In this film, Eile is walking, her feet touching the moist bog (another watery body). The film offers a meditation on bog ecologies that are deeply enmeshed with Irish society and culture; and another example of natureculture. We watch Eile pushing their hands across the surface and caressing the delicate and fragile substance of this organism. Bog ecologies play a central role in the global carbon cycle (including its storage) as well as being a source of fresh water which is inhabited by distinctive, co-evolved, assemblages of organisms.[50]

In times gone by, bogs have been approached with suspicion and fear. They ingest the dead, but leave imprints – haunting the future. In the Iron Age, bogs in Ireland were thought to be portals to other worlds; spaces of communication with spirits and more recently, the discovery of two Iron Age bog bodies in Ireland, incredibly preserved by the bog, have captured the collective imagination.[51] These bog bodies would have borne witness to the insults laid upon them by repeated British intrusions as part of the settler-colonialism which gave way to the border imperialism of partition in the 1920s. It is well documented that one aspect of the British colonial project was to 'tame' the Irish: their way of life and their customs but also their land, as captured in the words of Giraldus Cambrensis or the Gerald of Wales, the medieval British clergyman in his account of the topography of Ireland in 1186-8:

> The Irish are a rude people, subsisting on the produce of their cattle only, and living themselves like beasts – a people that has not yet departed from the primitive habits of pastoral life. In the common course of things, mankind progresses from forest to the field, from the field to the town, and to the social condition of the citizens…their pastures are short of herbage; cultivation is very rare, and there is scarcely any land sown. […] The whole habits of the people are contrary to agricultural pursuit.[52]

The *Eile / Bog* film moves across time, showing archive footage of peat cutting, to the creek of the wind farm in the distance, as reminder of yet more techno ecologies on this bog border.

50 Wisnu Adi Wicaksono, Tomislav Cernava, Christian Berg, and Gabriele Berg, 'Bog Ecosystems as a Playground for Plant–Microbe Coevolution: Bryophytes and Vascular Plants Harbour Functionally Adapted Bacteria', *Microbiome*, 9.1 (2021), p. 170 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40168-021-01117-7>.

51 Gladwin, Derek, *Contentious Terrains: Boglands, Ireland, Postcolonial Gothic* (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2016), p.2. See the Bog Bodies Research Project for further information: https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Collections-Research/Irish-Antiquities-Division-Collections/Collections-List-(1)/Iron-Age/Bog-Bodies-Research-Project.

52 Giraldus (Cambrensis), *The History and Topography of Ireland* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p. 70.

FROM BORDER FICTIONS TO FICTION ECOLOGIES

Throughout this article, we propose the praxis of border fictionings in Eile as a response to the colonial inhabitation of border imperialism, through a countering, ecologies framework that articulates experimental fiction ecologies. Eile reflectively makes a contribution to this mode of counter ecologies towards and with ecologies that are embodied, migratory, everyday, queer, more-than-human and feminist; and that entangle fact, fictions, fabulations and folklore with pasts, presents, and futures. These ecologies are sensory, material and insensible while always striving to be decolonial.[53]

The exhibition, and the installation it hosts, functioned for us as a sense-making encounter, carefully curated to hold seemingly disparate components together meaningfully affectively; to (re)negotiate their interrelationships. Through this reflection and (re)negotiation in co-curating the exhibition, we discovered how these nested fictions worked collectively to challenge the specific colonial inhabitation of border imperialism by refusing the naturalisation of border regime – and its own imaginaries and denial of the other.[54] The ecologies framework or assemblage is for us what John Akomfrah acknowledges as an ethic, which (potentially) enables acceptance of 'the coexistence of difference.'[55] The ecologies described above map out unlikely but meaningful relations and alliances across places, times and bodies, that enact various fiction ecologies across difference: organic, technological, social and political.

In direct opposition to the imaginary espoused by the colonial inhabitation of the Earth, we approach the production of fiction ecologies as a form of 'worlding' through a 'worldly-ecology [that] assumes a relational ontology that recognises that our existence and our bodies are made up of encounters with a plurality of human beings *and* a plurality of non-human beings.'[56] Within the Eile installation, the alternative imaginaries of the border, fostered by the practices of border fictionings, begin to open up the possibility of other modes of inhabitation of and with the earth. These modes not only demand, but also derive, existence through relations with others, 'those without whom the earth would not be the earth.'[57] In so doing, this practice of border fictionings seeks to foster agency, and what Haraway refers to as 'co-response-ability', even in the most inhospitable of places, involving 'a way of thinking that is not futurist but rather thinks of the present as a thick, complex tangle of times and places in which cultivating response-abilities, capacities to respond, matters'.[58] This approach denies the fixing, separating and controlling epistemes and ontologies of border imperialism and the fractures it creates. Instead, it advocates for plural ecologies that make and nurture various alliances and relations with the other.

53 For Kathryn Yusoff, the insensible 'is neither sense nor nonsense; it is between—as agitator, contagion, and never as presence as such—only as force or motivation oscillating between the material and virtual, inhuman and human, organic and nonorganic, time and the untimely.' Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), p. 213.

54 This exhibition was curated by Paula McCloskey and Sam Vardy as supported by the Bloc Project curator Dr Sunshine Wong.

55 John Akomfrah, *Co-existence of Times: A Conversation with John Akomfrah* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2021), p. 11.

56 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*; Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology*, p. 231.

57 Aimé Césaire cited by Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology*. Ferdinand says that 'Césaire provides a conception of inhabitation that does not "take the other into account", but which can only be conceived of on the condition of the presence of others'.

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Dr Paula McCloskey is an artist researcher and co-director of visual cultural organisation *a place of their own*. Working at the intersections of art (performance, film, sound, publishing) and architecture, her research and practice develop collaborative critical fictions – to think (with diverse communities) about possible alternate, social and ecological futures. She has developed ambitious and complex artistic work and research about partition and the border in Ireland and developed creative, transdisciplinary methodologies to explore cultural interpretations and experiences of the climate crisis. Paula is a Lecturer and Researcher in Fine Art at the School of Arts, Derby University.

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Sam also investigates alternative notions of architectural design and practice, based on critical theories of participation, autonomy, feminist architectures, and self-organised spaces, to explore socio-spatial infrastructures of autonomy and inclusion, and diverse modes of collective design and spatial production. Sam is Head of the Department of Architecture at Munster Technological University, and Associate Director of the Cork Centre for Architectural Education.

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DOWN IN MEXICO: TRANSMIGRATION AND STORYING AT THE BORDER.

Luis Hernan

ABSTRACT

New technologies on the Mexico-United States border involve an unprecedented collaboration between Silicon Valley and the United States Department of Defence. They bring with them a new form of narrating the border itself which, drawing on Science Fiction and Fantasy, is a means of justifying increasingly cruel ways of policing it.

Crossing the border is often a transmigration, suggesting a change of racial states that involve moving from a darker to a whiter shade. In this article, I experiment with a transmigration of stories, moving across different traditions of imagining the future. My ficto-critical approach is inspired by Magical Realism as a way to enable a dual spatiality of the text. It allows for Western and Native understandings of the land to co-exist and is a strategy to explore the connections between the imaginary and the real. The fragmentation, and the splicing involved in bringing them together, is a methodology that makes visible the project of colonisation and violence that are made invisible by the new technologies of the border.

To claim that something is true is now the convention of every made-up story.[1]

INTRODUCTION

The best thing to do will be to traverse the border (invent and traverse it).[2] The crossing is a transmigration, a change of states; a process of becoming, a transmutation of sorts, going from a darker to a lighter shade. The border I am imagining is real – it is made of steel plates and bollards, fencing and barbed wire. The border is an unforgiving landscape that kills thousands every year; a hostile immigration system that hunts 'wetbacks.'[3] And yet it needs to be imagined, storied. The materiality of the border has been brought together by ideas and discourses of what a division line between two countries, Mexico and the United States of America, means. I wonder, how am I meant to story this border? ¿Cómo hago sentido de esta frontera? This border, esta frontera en especial.

I started writing about the Mexico-United States border in 2019, the midway point of Donald J. Trump's tenure as the 45th president of the United States and a moment when doing so had an urgency: with a need to make sense of the way the border had been weaponised in a presidential campaign, a common occurrence in American politics but, this time, likely a deciding factor in a bitterly fought election.[4] Writing about the border was motivated by my own story as a migrant. I first crossed the border, physically, when I was four years old and since then I have repeated the crossing, the transmigration, symbolically.[5] I write this piece after having lived in the United Kingdom for more than a decade. My life story so far – studying in prestigious, private universities in Mexico, with my postgraduate study abroad hastening my becoming a part of the English-speaking academia – follows the script of 'whitening'.[6] Growing up I was racialised white, despite having a father who was racialised brown, and these rites of passage have, symbolically, made me whiter, more cosmopolitan, modern, less indigenous. The Mexico-United States border weighs heavily on my own sense of identity and so I must imagine and story it.

In *Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions*, Valeria Luiselli reflects on the experience of volunteering as a translator for refugee children.[7] To her, the practice of translation is beyond interpreting and more a fundamental act of turning reality into narrative: 'The children's stories are always shuffled, stuttered, always shattered beyond the repair of a narrative order. The problem with trying to tell their story is that it has no beginning, no middle, and no end.'[8] The experience of Luiselli is representative of the border itself: to narrate the borderlands is to string together stories that do not make sense, stories that are shuffled and shattered in multiple imaginations and memories. These contested stories and mythologies are important as, once more, they are at the centre of American politics. As the Democratic and Republican parties prepare for their caucuses and primary elections, the border with Mexico is once again at the core of the political debate with pre-candidates, including Donald Trump, promising tougher

1 Jorge Luis Borges, N.T. Di Giovanni, and A. Reid, *The Book of Sand*, Penguin Book (New York: Penguin Books, 1979).

2 A playful rephrasing of the opening lines of Octavio Paz's The Monkey Grammarian. Paz is an important piece in understanding the stories of the border and the Mexican Diaspora, as explored later in this text. See: Octavio Paz, *The Monkey Grammarian* (London: Peter Owen, 1989).

3 Ivar Chaar López suggests that the 'smart' technologies of the border date back to at least the 1970s with the development of the Border Patrol intrusion detection system. The idea of securing the border through sensing technologies was inspired by emerging theories of Cybernetics and shaped by a racialised understanding of bodies. Popular press at the time reported that the new technologies would 'help agents control wetbacks and narcotic smugglers.'. Wetback is a racist epithet which makes reference to migrants crossing 'illegally' by swimming across the Rio Bravo. See: Iván Chaar-López, 'Sensing Intruders: Race and the Automation of Border Control', *American Quarterly*, 71.2 (2019), pp. 495–518, https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2019.0040.

4 The work I started in 2019 would be later published as: Luis Hernan, 'Wireless Borders: Illegal Bodies and Connected Futures', in *Informal Settlements of the Global South, Architectural Borders and Territories*, 1st edn (London: Routledge, 2023), pp. 47-62.

immigration policies that involve a more secure border. Separating the 2016 and 2024 elections are a new set of stories, told in a familiar register, that have shifted the symbolic and material articulation of the border.

I have written elsewhere of the way that Silicon Valley has become involved in the militarisation of the border, creating technologies of surveillance and deterrence that are meant to 'leverage' consumer technology in the defence of the American nation.[9] Overall, I am interested in Silicon Valley cultures increasingly defining architectural spaces and how, in turn, these cultures were shaped by the bringing together of mythologies and imaginations that draw heavily from Science Fiction (SF).[10] SF has become crucial in the efforts to militarise the border, reconfiguring new imaginaries of masculinity and right-wing politics which in turn frame the new technologies of the border as being used for the right cause, defending the nation from the threats that lay beyond the realm.

The border has always been a fertile ground for stories – fictional or other – which define the American nation as a grand march of progress westwards, expanding the domain of civilisation and shrinking that of the unruly and the untamed. This foundational myth makes invisible the other processes of movement, relocation and expulsion that have informed the communities who live within its (shifting) borders and which, spatially, are defined by a movement from South to North.[11] In this article, I experiment with mythologies that counter the new Silicon Valley technological materialities of the border, technologies that make crossing more dangerous while simultaneously shifting politics and ethical framing by appealing to a new demographic of gamers and SF fans who are called to defend the realm from an 'alien' invasion. Central to understanding these new mythologies is the figure of the 'tech-bro', a man who styles himself as the genius behind Silicon Valley and who constructs his persona through a performative display of masculinity, bluster and expletive-leaden comebacks (occasionally escalating to challenges to bare-knuckle cage-fights).

I attempt here a transmigration of stories, weaving fiction and drawing, to guide me in a voyage that starts in the new mythologies of the border, as (re)imagined by Silicon Valley. On the other side of this journey are counter mythologies suggesting different processes of movement, displacement and becoming in and around the Mexico-United States border. My starting point is Palmer Luckey, the founder of Anduril and creator of the Sentry. I analyse his own use of Science Fiction to narrate the technology and shift its politics towards an audience of *The Lord of the Rings* fans. I then shift my focus to Magical Realism and the way its dual spatiality allows for two conflicting world views to be co-present in the text, the logic of the European intellectual tradition and the mysterious, magical (and often assumed irrational) native world system. Inspired by the politics of the possible enabled by Magical Realism, in the second part of the paper I use a ficto-critical approach, weaving fictional and critical accounts in three transmigrated stories: Dressing Up, Categories of Exclusion, and Stories of the Border. 'America' is actually the name of the whole continent, but for the sake of consistency with existing literature I use 'America' as a short name for the United States of America.

5 This piece is, in many ways, one half of a longer piece. I suggest reading this piece in combination with: Luis Hernan, 'Of Force Fields and Men: Fiction and Race in the Mexican Border', *Architecture and Culture, Border Fictions*, Special Issue, 9.2 (2024).

6 The notion of blanquitud or whitening was proposed by the Ecuadorian-Mexican philosopher Bolívar Echeverría to theorise the role of race in the project of Modernity, especially as it involves the processes of colonisation and extractivism that have defined Latin-America. The sense in which I use it here, as a personal process of "betterment" is developed further by Federico Navarrete. See: Bolivar Echeverria, *Modernity and 'Whiteness'*, trans. by Rodrigo Ferreira (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019); Federico Navarrete Linares, 'Blanquitud vs. blancura, mestizaje y privilegio en México de los siglos XIX a XXI, una propuesta de interpretación', *Estudios Sociológicos de El Colegio de México*, 40 (2022), pp. 119–50, https://doi.org/10.24201/es.2022v40.2080.

7 Valeria Luiselli, *Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions* (London: Harper Collins, 2017).

8 Luiselli, *Tell Me*, p. 14.

9 Hernan, 'Of Force Fields'.

10 Luis Hernan and Carolina Ramirez-Figueroa, 'A Home with a Future. Digital Domesticity and the Vague Fictions of Silicon Valley', *Architecture and Culture*, pp. 1–21, https://doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2023.2170118.

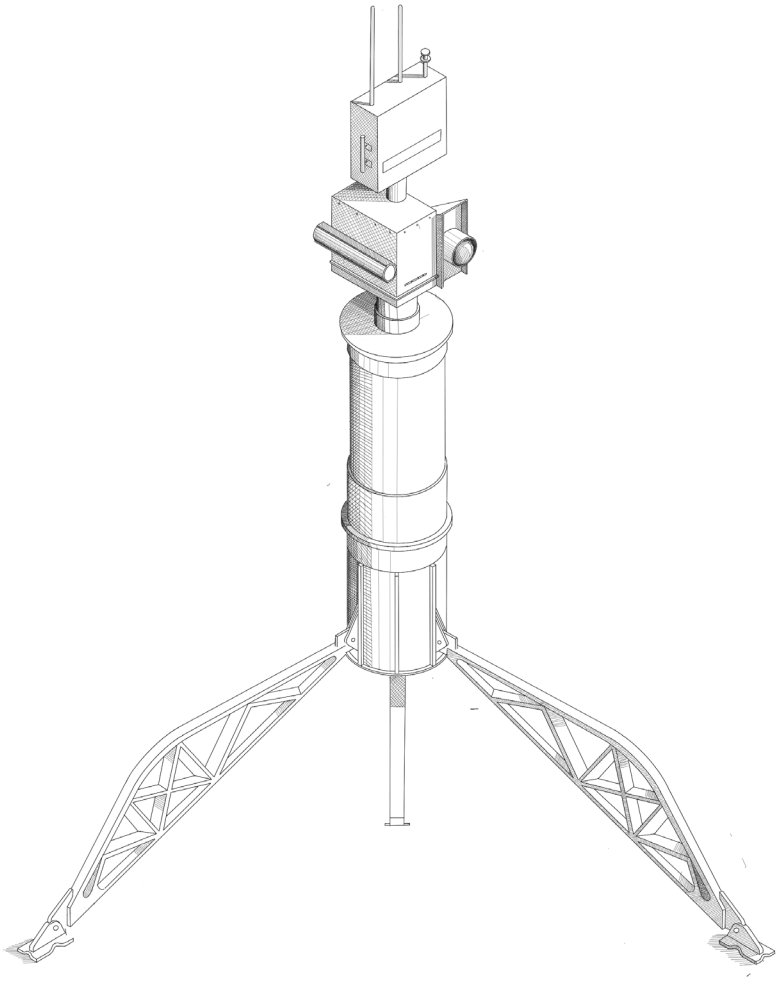


Figure 1 Anduril Sentry. One of the early prototypes of the Sentry developed for the Mexico/US border. Image by author.

11 This piece owes an immense debt of gratitude to Valeria Luiselli. The central thesis here, that the stories of the border can be defined spatially through their east to west, south to north, is explored by Luiselli in her Lost Children Archive. She reflects on the way the book challenges the genre of the road novel, which she identifies as central to the myth of the American nation and its expanding border west: 'The book intertwines the foundational myth of the East to West narrative with all these other ways of understanding movement and displacement and relations in this country and in doing so it brings other traditions in storytelling which is not only the American-Anglo tradition of the road novel, but also the Latin-American tradition where the trip or the voyage has a lot to do with descending into consciousness, descending into the underworld.' The theme of the descent to the underworld will be relevant in the second half of this piece, also inspired by the work of Yuri Herrera. See: Valeria Luiselli, 'Lost Children Archive at the Penguin Random House Open Book Event' (New York, 2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1auQ1_snZUY; Valeria Luiselli, *Lost Children Archive*, trans. by Christina McSweeney (London: Harper Collins, 2019).

12 Image by author redrawn from the original photograph by Gregg Segal for the cover of Time Magazine. See: Joel Stein, 'Why Virtual Reality Is About to Change the World,' *Time*, August 2015, https://time.com/3987022/why-virtual-reality-is-about-to-change-the-world/.

13 Gregory Renault, 'Science Fiction as Cognitive Estrangement: Darko Suvin and the Marxist Critique of Mass Culture', *Discourse*, 2 (1980), pp. 113–41. Suvin discusses Science Fiction at length in: Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016).

14 John Rieder, *Science Fiction and the Mass Cultural Genre System* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2017).

TECHNO-FANTASIES

Palmer Luckey is a self-confessed Science Fiction dork, giggly as he recites impromptu lines from the original *Star Trek* and its Holodeck, or how working for the Department of Defence is actually cool and that there is nothing wrong with being a fan of *The Lord of the Rings* and a patriot and wanting your country to be great again.

As a genre, Science Fiction has been notably difficult to define, excluded as it has often been from the formal literary genres. Darko Suvin famously defined it as a genre of 'cognitive estrangement,' by which he meant to distinguish it from other forms of speculative fiction which present the familiar in an unfamiliar light, for example Mythology and Fantasy.[12] The creation of alternative universes is linked to a cognitive, or scientific rigour. Suvin's definition has been seen as problematic in the way it is normative rather than descriptive: it creates an ideal image of what the genre ought to be so it can be included in serious academic studies, rather than on existing SF, the historically situated catalogue of texts associated with the genre.[13]

Existing Science Fiction had been important in crafting the mythologies of Palmer Luckey and, in turn, of the border.[14] Luckey was involved in the 2016 Trump campaign, financing far-right groups to smear Hillary Clinton. However, after a media scandal he was forced to leave Facebook and later he founded Anduril, a company which aims at leveraging consumer technology for the defence sector. The name of the company, Anduril, references the mythological sword in *The Lord of the Rings*, capable of summoning the deadliest army ever to walk the Earth. The first product of the company was the Anduril Sentry, a mobile observation post meant to provide sensors on the ground to create situational awareness displayed through '*Call of Duty* goggles.' When asked about the motivation for the device, Luckey describes having long conversations with his co-founders in which Science Fiction becomes the common frame of reference. They talk of *The Matrix*, *Star Wars* and then an idea crystallises: they will create a force field for the Mexican border, just like the ones protecting the fleet of *Star Trek*.

Silicon Valley is well-known for its use of Science Fiction as a way of making sense of the technologies it produces, both as an inspiration for its own designers and as a narrative device to communicate with their customers.[15] The relationship between the real and imagined is an important element of the cultures of the Valley, justifying the way it hoards talent and wealth by promising to create technologies that will bring about prosperity and progress. The ability with which Palmer Luckey crafts his personal mythology speaks of the hyper-masculinity of the tech-nerd, used by him and others to obscure the material conditions of inequality buttressing innovation.[16] I have written elsewhere of the way that the interplay of the imagined and the real in the Silicon Valley mythologies connect it to the foundational techno-utopianism which, alongside the cult of domesticity in the nineteenth century, justified the emergence of the United States as a settler colonialist project.[17]

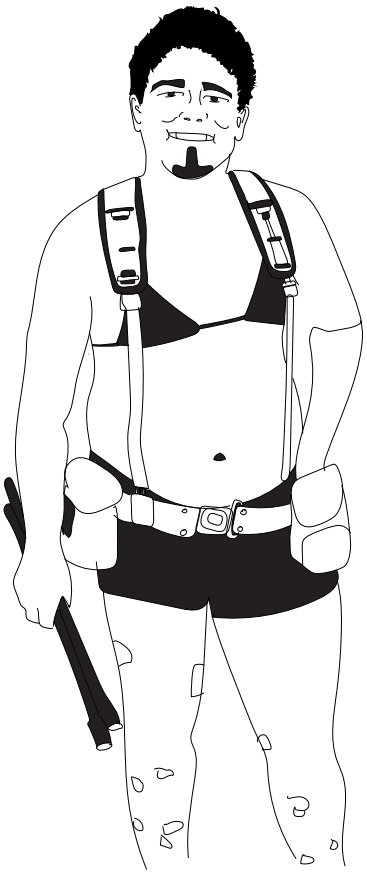
15 There is a well-documented link between Silicon Valley and Speculative Fiction. Janeil Page Swarthout looks at the way that new technologies often draw on mythological visions of unity and redemption and that, against the common assumption that technological pursuits are driven by rational enquiry, spiritual pursuits are at the core of Silicon Valley's identity. See: Janeil Page Swarthout, 'The Gods of Silicon Valley: Finding Mythological Meanings within the Technologies of the 21st Century' (unpublished Ph.D., Pacifica Graduate Institute).

16 Emily Crandall, Rachel Brown and John McMahon look at Peter Thiel and Elon Musk, prominent Silicon Valley figures connected to Palmer Luckey, to suggest that the mythologies of Silicon Valley are not innocent allusions and rhetorical devices but instruments to depoliticise the human and material cost of bringing about the utopia involved in the conception of Silicon Valley as the beacon of civilisation-saving innovation. See: Emily K. Crandall, Rachel H. Brown, and John McMahon, 'Magicians of the Twenty-First Century: Enchantment, Domination, and the Politics of Work in Silicon Valley', *Theory & Event*, 24.3 (2021), pp. 841–73, https://doi.org/10.1353/tae.2021.0045.

17 See Hernan, 'Of Force Fields'.

Figure 2 (above) Palmer floating away. Palmer Luckey came to prominence with his work crafting the Oculus Drift, a device that 'revolutionised' the games industry by offering a cheaper alternative to cumbersome and expensive Virtual Reality headsets. Image by author. Image by author redrawn from the original photograph by Gregg Segal for the cover of Time Magazine. See: Joel Stein, 'Why Virtual Reality Is About to Change the World,' *Time*, August 2015, https://time.com/3987022/why-virtual-reality-is-about-to-change-the-world/.

Figure 3 (below) Palmer Luckey cosplaying as 'Quiet', the heroine in of the videogame Metal Gear Solid V. The costume, with bikini and ripped stockings, was criticised as sexist. In response, the creator Hideo Kajima crafted a backstory to justifying it, saying Quiet was infected with a parasite which requires her to absorb oxygen through her skin. Palmer attended Mashi Asobi in 2017, a Japanese Science Fiction convention, in 2017 cosplaying as Quiet. Image by author redrawn from the news article: James Vincent, 'Palmer Luckey Returns to Public Life Sporting a New Goatee', *The Verge*, 5 May 2017, https://www.theverge.com/tldr/2017/5/5/15555224/



MAGICAL REALISM

It is this tension between the imagined and the real which, paradoxically, creates fruitful parallels to the tradition of Speculative Fiction in Latin America (and the opportunity to re-imagine the new technologies of the border). The term Magical Realism was originally used to describe the post-expressionism of 1920s painting, in which scenes of photographic naturalism were juxtaposed with paradoxical elements that gave them a sense of unreality.[18] It was not until the 1940s when the term became territorialised, acquiring a political valence in Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier's conception of the marvellous real (the 'real maravilloso' in the original) which he linked to Latin American history and politics, where it was 'encountered in its raw state, latent and omnipresent.'[19] Instead of an aesthetic category, the marvellous real signified a political movement and an ethical position, used to resist the historical effects of empire in the region and the very real hegemony that Europe and the United States still exerted in these countries.[20]

Magical Realism has overlaps with other traditions of speculative fiction. Like Fantasy (and Science Fiction to an extent), Magical Realism is defined by the juxtaposition of the real and the fantastic, which points to 'rationalism turning upon itself'.[21] Attending to its original meaning in the art criticism of Franz Roh, Magical Realism presents the real in a cold, clinical style while weaving elements that make the familiar seem unfamiliar (an operation which resonates with the cognitive estrangement of Science Fiction as proposed by Suvin).[22] It differentiates itself, however, by introducing elements of the fantastic which it makes part of the real and, by doing so, challenges Western literary traditions which exclude the possibility of the supernatural and the magic coexisting with reality. Suzanne Baker suggests that the genre is defined by a dual spatiality of the text, in which two conflicting worldviews are co-present, the logic of the European intellectual tradition and the mysterious, magical (and often assumed irrational) native world system.[23]

18 The definition of Magical Realism is disputed and dependent on who formulates it. For contemporary Latin American writers, the term has become a sort of cage, a way of encapsulating the whole of the literary production of the region independent of its formal and thematic concerns (which is rich and varied). The two main definitions are connected to Roh's and to Carpentier's which, although polar opposites on first inspection, suggests that both terms react to violent historical moments. While the term in Latin America became a symbol or resistance to European and American hegemony (and later to the repression of dictatorial regimes), Roh thinks of Magical Realism as a strategy to show "the inextinguishable horrors of our time". See: Kenneth Reeds, 'Magical Realism: A Problem of Definition', *Neophilologus*, 90.2 (2006), pp. 175–96, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11061-005-4228-z.

19 The term, however, was used earlier in the same year (1949) by Venezuelan writer Arturo Uslar Pietri who, borrowing the term from a translation of Roh's text published in the literary magazine Revista de Occidente, wrote of a 'new creative mode' which considered 'man as a mystery amidst realist data. A sort of poetic divination, or a poetic denial of reality. Something which, for lack of a better term, could be defined as magical realism' (translation author's own). The text in the original Spanish is quoted in: Kenneth Reeds, *Magical Realism*, p. 181.

20 There are multiple interpretations of the definition of Magical Realism and its status as a literary form unique to Latin America, its politics and history. While Carpentier claims it as a political stance against empire, Puerto Rican theorist and critic Angel Flores argues for the universality of the term, finding its precursors in Franz Kafka, Edgar Allan Poe and Herman Melville. For a detailed discussion of the nuances in the Carpentier and Flores definition of Magical Realism, see: Defne Tutan, 'A Hybrid Discourse: From Latin American Magic Realism to the British Postcolonial Postmodern Novel', *Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergis*i, 36 (2016), pp. 38–50.

21 Theo D'haen quoted in Tutan, 'A Hybrid Discourse', p. 40.

22 This observation is borrowed from Reeds and his analysis of the relationship between Expressionism and the Magical Realism conceptualised by Roh. He writes: 'magical realism was a return to reality, but not simply going back to the realism which existed before Expressionism — a homecoming which carried with it the baggage from the trip through Expressionism's existential voyage, a mix of wild flights and anchored reality […] it tried to dissect it, renew it in a cold, clinical style while presenting it in such a way that the normal became familiar.' See Kenneth Reeds, *Magical Realism*, p. 178.

23 Suzanne Baker, 'Binarisms and Duality: Magic Realism and Postcolonialism', ed. by Michèle Drouart, *Span Postcolonial Fictions*, October.36 (1993), pp. 82–87.

The dual spatiality of Magical Realism explains the way it has been theorised in the context of post-colonialism. When Carpentier argued that in Latin America the 'strange is always commonplace' he was reflecting on a sense of alienation felt by many in the region and across the Global South where 'reality is imposed from the outside', which requires reality to be inverted and deconstructed 'to substitute their own vision.'[24] Magical Realism is located in Latin America, with its specific history of repression, violence and waves of Spanish, Portuguese, French, British and Dutch colonisation, but it also extends to authors in other regions coming to terms with the legacies and ongoing processes of colonisation.[25] It thus operates as a challenge to the Enlightenment and the associated project of European colonialism, becoming an 'oppositional instrument, overtly critical of imperial and colonialist politics' which 'seeks to subvert colonial cultural hierarchies "by revaluing the alternative, non-Western systems of thought, presenting them as a corrective or supplement to the dominant world view".'[26]

Understanding Magical Realism as a response to post-colonial geographies, in the plural rather than as a regional movement, enables connections with other traditions of imagining. José David Saldivar contextualises Magical Realism in post-modernist literature, which brings the genre close to the notion of fabulation, defined by Robert Scholes as a departure from 'direct representation of the surface of reality' paired with a reengagement of reality 'by way of ethically controlled fantasy.'[27] Although Scholes highlights the playful aspects involved in the term of fabulation, the act is meant as 'an attempt to find more subtle correspondences between the reality which is fiction and the fiction which is reality.'[28] Fabulation suggests also a reaching out beyond formal narrative and into the everyday practices of storytelling as a way of making sense of the world. In a more contemporary theorisation of the term, Donna Haraway chooses to speak of Speculative Fabulations, partly as a word play on Science Fiction but also as an invitation for a more diverse coming together of disciplines and traditions (Speculative Feminism, Speculative Fantasy) as well as the everyday practices of storytelling and worlding. For Haraway, the fable is a creative place to explore facts that do not hold still and that give way to new possibilities.[29]

23 Suzanne Baker, 'Binarisms and Duality: Magic Realism and Postcolonialism', ed. by Michèle Drouart, *Span Postcolonial Fictions*, October.36 (1993), pp. 82–87.

24 See Tutan, 'A Hybrid', p. 42.

25 The term of Magical Realism is much devalued in contemporary Latin America, scorned by many writers given the way it has been used historically to exoticise and simplify the literary output of a whole region (making it more palatable and attractive to the translation market). Maria Takolander suggests that despite the problematic beginnings and evolution of the genre, it is still a valuable device to speak of minority experiences. She suggests that the irony that permeates Magical Realist texts make them an ideal vehicle to examine 'the spectral nature of the fake and of the real.' See: Maria Takolander, 'Magical Realism and Fakery: After Carpentier's "Marvelous Real" and Mudrooroo's "Maban Reality"', *Antipodes*, 24.2 (2010), pp. 165–71.

26 The quote is from Jesús Benito, Ana Manzanas and Begoña Simal who write their definition of Magical Realism as a postcolonial genre interwoven with that of Elleke Boehmer. See: Jesús Benito, Ana M. Manzanas, and Begoña Simal, 'Juxtaposed Realities: Magical Realism and/as Postcolonial Experience', in *Uncertain Mirrors* (Brill, 2009), p. 107; Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*, OPUS (Oxford: University Press, 1995).

27 Robert Scholes, *Fabulation and Metafiction* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979), pp. 4-8.

28 In drawing the relationship between Postmodernism, Magical Realism and Fabulation I am following the argument made by Defne Ersin Tutan, who has developed an exhaustive review of Magical Realism as post-colonial literature. The quotes come from Sholes. See: Tutan, 'A Hybrid Discourse', pp. 38–50; Scholes, *Fabulation*.

FICTO-CRITICAL APPROACHES

I use the term ficto-critical in reference to the work of others who experiment with fictional registers to overcome the limitations of critical theory. An endless permutation of terms used as adjective and noun, Critical Fiction, Criticism Fiction, Fictional Critical, suggests how different authors might incorporate fiction as a way of producing different kinds of critical writing.[30] Jane Rendell uses a ficto-critical approach to bring subjectivities to bear on the way that sites are understood.[31] Hélène Frichot has used the combination to explore the colonial pasts and their enduring presents in tourism.[32] Emma Cheatle uses fiction to give voice to women and minorities who have been underrepresented in history and lost.[33] Naomi Stead has explored the way that words construct architectural worlds, as well as how different cultures, queer, lesbian, gay, are represented in these.[34]

In developing my own ficto-critical approach, I am interested in the way that Magical Realism can enable ways of exploring the textures of the real. I use fictional writing as a way of applying a corrective lens which, to paraphrase Barbara Godard, helps us in seeing through the fiction we have been convinced to take for the real and imagine ways of decentring technology and the hold tech-bros have over our imaginations of the future.[35] Saldivar suggests that Magical Realism operates by superimposing one reality on another, making way for a different politics of the possible and, inspired by this, I create accounts which superimpose fiction over the real-life Palmer Luckey.[36] The process is fragmentary, using three short fictions as critical prompts which, themselves, are a transmutation, shifting strategies and devices from Science Fiction, predominant north of the border, to the fantastical and fable, more at home in the south. This juxtaposition and splicing are meant to detect potentialities in the present and pull on the threads involved in the way that technology forces us to imagine the future of the border.

29 In describing facts that won't hold still, Haraway uses the term of wild facts from Martha Kenney. See: Martha Kenney, 'Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulhocene', *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, 2015, pp. 255–70; Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

30 Jane Rendell, 'Prelude: The Ways in Which We Write,' in *Writing Architectures: Ficto-Critical Approaches*, ed. by Hélène Frichot and Naomi Stead, (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), pp. 1–10.

31 Jane Rendell, *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

32 Hélène Frichot, 'Incompossible Constructions of an Island Paradise', in *Writing Architectures: Ficto-Critical Approaches*, ed. by Hélène Frichot and Naomi Stead, (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), pp. 47–59.

33 Emma Cheatle, 'Writing Architectures: Ficto-Critical Routes through Eighteenth-Century London', in *Writing Architectures: Ficto-Critical Approaches*, ed. by Hélène Frichot and Naomi Stead (London: Bloomsbury, 2020); Emma Cheatle, *Part-Architecture The Maison de Verre, Duchamp, Domesticity and Desire in 1930s Paris* (London: Routledge, 2017).

34 Naomi Stead, *Semi-Detached: Writing, Representation and Criticism in Architecture* (Melbourne: Uro Media, 2012).

35 Barbara Godard quoted in Rendell, 'Prelude', p. 4.

36 José David Saldivar, 'Postmodern Realism', in *The Columbia History of the American Novel*, ed. by Emory Elliott and Cathy N. Davidson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

DRESSING UP

Palmer takes the stage. He wears denim trousers, too long, but doesn't roll them. They fall long over naked ankles and leather flip flops. The blue shirt is untucked, top button undone and wide collar carefully spread over the lapels of an oversized jacket, cuffs slipping into his thumbs. He looks like a kid Halloween-dressing as Tony Montana. He paces around the stage, speaks in a monotone voice as he tries to remember his lines. He loses his breath, draws air as quick as he can – his sentences come in a flurry. His throat dries up; he smacks and clicks like a metronome. He rambles and breaks up his soliloquies with long pauses. He loses his place, gesticulates, closes his eyes and tries to remember the sequence of ideas. He looks around in panic, pleading for help. He looks confused. He rolls his sleeves and knocks the air once, twice, three times, see if that brings the idea back. It doesn't. He squints and looks at the monitor – 'I'm a little short-sighted so right before this I realised, I couldn't read all my notes,' he belches and trails off and back into his speech.

Deep breath, closes his eyes again. 'Okay, this is my first time in a Defence conference, and it's been so awesome to come and speak to all of you guys and see how we can do something cool and awesome together.' He knows he is rushing, he slows down and squints once again to read his notes in the prompter. 'So, I'm super passionate about Artificial Intelligence and what it can do for you guys. I am a patriot and I want the Sentry to be the force field to defend this great nation. We've done some progress there and I'm super proud of what we did but let's be honest, right now, it's a dumb force field, bunch of sensors and we can detect someone crossing the border. Kid's play, boooring!'

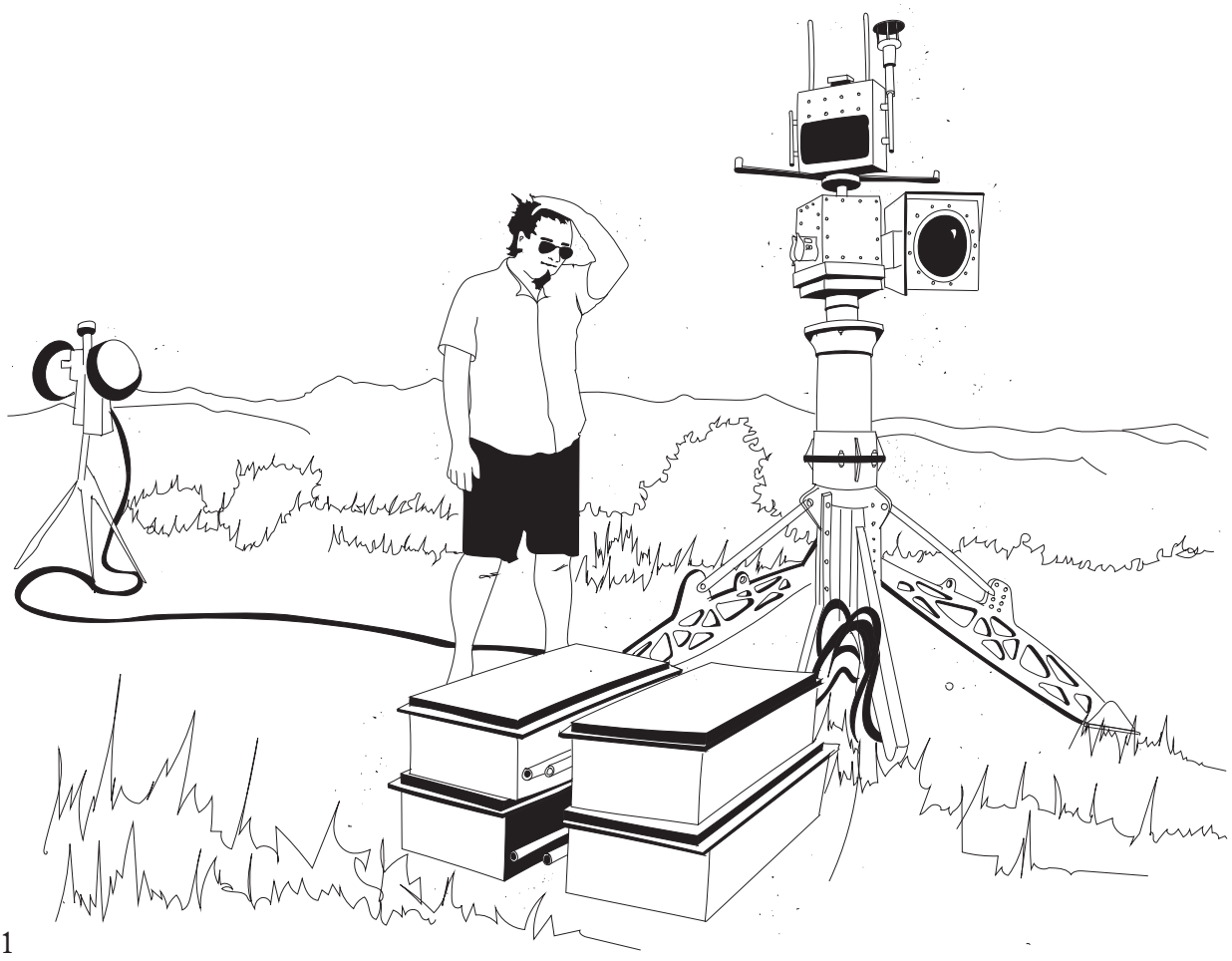
The audience smirks and the stars in the lapels catch the light. He has them, they're hooked. "What you need is a smart force field. Look, it's easy, the problem that you have is not detecting when someone crosses the border. You want to know when the wrong sort of people crosses it. I know, the people at Legal asked me to say I'm not racist but let's face it, not everyone belongs in this country!

'So AI is very early, we're just seeing the tip of the iceberg of what is possible. ChatGPT, Midjourney, very exciting and cool but we're ready to do things that we're not able to do with any other technology. That's why I've been working on an AI to detect illegals. It's very simple — we can all be reduced to a pile of information, from the trail we leave when we look up stuff online to the phone numbers we call. Put it all together and it's a fatberg of nonsense. But feed it to the AI and it can tell you exactly who you are, your age, gender, education. And this is where it gets very exciting. There's some awesome stuff coming out of sound analysis — we listen to the people crossing and we can tell you, with a really high rate of precision, where they come from. We analyse the language they speak, the accent, but we also pick up on the small details, the clothes they use, the sound that cheap fabrics make when they walk, how fast, how nervous they are when they cross. All of this stuff leaves something I call the "Alien Signature". Put that on a Sentry and you have an intelligent force field. It zooms into wetbacks and blocks them.[37]

'Think of all the money you spend in passports, visas, and border agents checking them. That's the past, you don't need that anymore. How cool is that?" Standing ovation. Palmer smiles. He's made a killing.

37 Although Artificial Intelligence speech recognition has not been integrated in the Anduril Sentry yet, the technology has been used in the European border. As Pedro Oliveira argues, efforts to detect 'migrant' bodies date back to the use of human linguists, a practice that raised ethical concerns over accuracy. Artificial Intelligence has provided a false sense of reliability and precision, to a deeply flawed, racist idea. See: Pedro Oliveira, 'To Become Undone', *DING Magazine*, 2021, https://dingdingding.org/issue-4/to-become-undone/.

Figure 4 Palmer and his Sentry, listening for trouble. Image by author.



Edward Said suggests that the ideas sustaining colonisation are threaded throughout the cultural production of empires. The connection is nowhere as evident as it is in the emergence of the novel in the nineteenth century, 'a cultural artefact of bourgeois society' that is closely interwoven in the fabric of imperialism to the point they are 'unthinkable without each other.'[38] Rieder expands the argument to suggest the same is true of Science Fiction, with its tropes and narratives deeply interwoven with those of empire.[39] The Anduril Sentry is imagined as a technology of ordering and control in its reference to *Star Trek*'s force fields, which protect the intergalactic ships that explore and expand the Empire. It is a technology which embodies the principles of hierarchy and othering that sustain imperial and colonising projects, making sense of who belongs and who does not.

But it is also our narratives of technology that are laced with colonialism. The Silicon Valley credo beatifies the self-made genius who wrestles and slays the dragon of bloated, stifled economies; Steve Jobs for Apple, Mark Zuckerberg for Facebook, Jeff Bezos for Amazon, Elon Musk for Tesla, Larry Page and Sergey Brin for Google.[40] The way we think of the technoscience complex suffers from what the writers Ada Palmer and Jo Walton terms as *protagonismo*: the assumption that one person, a white, wealthy man, can 'save the day, make the difference, solve the problem and change everything.'[41] As an antidote, Malka Older suggests speculative resistance, using the power of speculative fiction to explore alternative ways in which society might be organised.[42] Speculative resistance goes against the tales of heroic men to imagine, for example, the power of collectives to destabilise.

38 Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Random House, 2014), pp. 70-71.

39 Rieder, *Colonialism and the Emergence*, pp. 1-2.

40 Richard Tutton, 'Sociotechnical Imaginaries and Techno-Optimism: Examining Outer Space Utopias of Silicon Valley', *Science as Culture* 30, no. 3 (3 July 2021): pp. 416–39, https://doi.org/10.1080/09505431.2020.1841151.

41 Ada Palmer and Jo Walton, 'The Protagonist Problem', *Uncanny, A Magazine of Science Fiction and Fantasy*, June 1, 2021, https://www.uncannymagazine.com/article/the-protagonist-problem/>.

42 Anke Schwarz, "Practice Believing That the World Can Change Radically": Interview with Malka Older,' *Latin American Futures*, 9.1 (2021), pp. 27–32.

CATEGORIES OF EXCLUSION

WIRED magazine, March 2028

The idea was simple enough. When Palmer proposed to detect the 'alien signature', his idea was to combine all sorts of metrics to determine someone's nationality. And it worked, for a while. The DOD described the prototype as a 'resounding success' and it was soon rolled into mass production to create the 'United States Force Field'. Then we learned the AI was having trouble placing people in just two categories, so the last time the company released a statement they had evolved the model to allow a list of 56 other options which placed anyone in a spectrum, from 'full-blooded, honest-to-God' American to 'frijolero'. After being accused, once again, of structural racism, the company stopped discussing the model in public.

Now we know why. The cyber-activist group 'Los Hijos de Aztlán/Aztlán Brood' began to quietly feed the model with inconsistencies and paradoxes, or what they called as the 'sounds of the new people'. They would, for example, feed the AI with the sound of a Missourian man listening to 3,459 hours of underground psychedelic cumbia while writing recipes for 385 variations of salsa verde in one year. Then they started their campaign of 'poetic performance', with activists on both sides of the border "assimilating" each other's gait and posture and gestures. At the height of evocative brilliance, a Sinaloan woman walked the land stretch of the Mexico-United States border reciting the lines of all of Quentin Tarantino's movies. 'And do you know what they call a Quarter Pounder with cheese in Paris?'

AI researchers believe the system must have collapsed at some point in the last three weeks, overwhelmed by ever-expanding categories and fractal branching. A specialist in AI ethics interviewed for this piece suggested a different scenario. AI systems are said to 'hallucinate' when the wrong data set is fed to them and, as a result, begin to spit nonsensical answers to queries. She believes, however, that systems hallucinate when there is a logical, or moral fallacy, in the original model. 'Maybe it was never possible to categorise people, maybe we were never meant to keep them apart.'

The DOD was contacted for comment.

Gloria Anzaldúa defines the Mexico-US border as the place where the first world grates against the third. It is also the place where different projects of colonisation, the British and Spanish Empire, collide and overlap but coincide in their foundational 'humanism'. As Rosi Braidotti reminds us, the human is a category that indexes exclusions, a hierarchical system that sexualises, racialises and naturalises others.[43] The Spanish colonial project depended on a principle of 'puridad de sangre', blood purity, which ensured peninsular Spaniards kept control of the colonies in the American continent and considered the non-Christian natives as less-than-human subjects with no right to land possession.[44] The settler colonialism of the United States relied on a similar strategy of voiding the rights of Native Americans to the land, which gave white settlers undisputed rights. The involvement of Silicon Valley in border technologies follows a well-documented form of 'digital colonialism' in which corporations extract value from the Global South and keep a clear demarcation with the North.[45] These materialities are joined by rhetoric in the United States media, in which migrant bodies are considered less human and out of place, in need of removal.[46] The commonality of being othered suggests forms of solidarity between technology and those who are still not considered fully human.

43 Rosi Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge* (Cambridge: Wiley, 2019).

44 María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

45 Michael Kwet, 'Digital Colonialism: US Empire and the New Imperialism in the Global South', *Race & Class*, 60.4 (2019), pp. 3–26, doi.org/10.1177/0306396818823172.

46 Otto Santa Ana, '"Like an Animal I Was Treated": Anti-Immigrant Metaphor in US Public Discourse', *Discourse & Society* 10, no. 2 (1 April 1999): pp. 191–224, doi:10.1177/0957926599010002004.

STORIES OF THE BORDER

It's the eternal return. Aztlán is to the North, pass the field of Silent Totems. Con nuestros pasos volvemos sobre los de nuestros ancestros, we walk back on their steps. Tihueque, tihueque, the land of herons awaits. We walk over the steel footprints of The Beast, tracing the journey of the 12,000 who gave their hearts to keep Huitzilopochtli alive.[47] *The slow trundle of metal and joy and screams of the elders. The hands of the women who brought food and the hands of the men who pulled them to the ground. Tihueque, tihueque. We walk in silence, remembering, in communion.*

We walk in silence until we see the Silent Totems and then we scream and we sing and we talk in the thousand tongues of our peoples. The Silent Totems listen to us, impassive, their whirring and humming waiting for us.

It is said that the people of the desert attained such perfection in the Art of Cartography that they drew maps of minute detail and in time, the maps thought for themselves and knew of people of a thousand tongues and hundred skins.[48] *The totems fell silent and dreamt us, and then they were left to the inclemencies of the sun. Tattered ruins of a rational time. The people of the desert thought the totems useless and perished.*

Tihueque, tihueque, Aztlán is near. We touch the metal skin of the Totems and then each other's and say, we are the New People. Somos la Nueva Gente y estas son las historias con las que hacemos mundos. Worlds are made with these stories.

The border is a fertile ground for mythologies, imagined on both sides of the division line. The idea of the border as a line that separates the civilised world from wilderness has been historically fundamental to the construction of American identity and the elusive but powerful story of the American Dream.[49] The historian Frederick Jackson Turner, for example, suggested that the frontier line came to define the American nation in the nineteenth century, creating a character distinct from the European nations, that championed democracy and egalitarianism.[50] The idea of an American Frontierism reinforces the dogma of Manifest Destiny, which made white Americans into a divinely ordained race destined to rule over the continent and bring civilization to the savage natives.[51] The border is, to this days, narrated as a line that separates civilisation from wilderness, as found in 'narco-porn' literature, Hollywood neo-Westerns and news coverage that describes the border as out of control.

Despite its apparent solidity, it is important to point out that the idea of the border as an impenetrable barrier is a relatively recent invention, and that counter mythologies have long suggested a porous membrane rather than a hard demarcation. The poetry of Facundo Bernal, for example, reminds us of 'a time, before fences, walls, and the Border Patrol, when the border existed to be crossed'.[52] Bernal was born in Hermosillo, a border city in the Mexican northern state of Sonora, but became an influential voice documenting the emergence of a hybrid people, the pocho community, whose constantly shifting identity and dynamic language speaks of the interconnection of communities at the borderland.[53]

Crossing the border is a transmutation. A descent into the underworld, not in the Christian understanding of a place of torment, but closer to the depiction of Mictlān, the deepest region of the Mexica underworld. Yuri Herrera explores the act of crossing the border in *Signs Preceding the End of the World*, a novel which tells the story of a young woman, Makina, who crosses to the United States to find his estranged brother.[54] Despite the fact that the story is shared by countless Mexicans, Herrera tells the story in a mythological register, using the motif of the underworld to signify the transformation involved in the act of crossing the border; as Makina discovers, her brother has adopted an American identity and become a decorated soldier, making his return to his homeland impossible. Cordelia Barrera suggests that this 'mythic mode' is a strategy to break the acknowledged order of everyday reality and to create an awareness of the 'minority, ethnic and

47 Tihueque is Náhuatl for 'now let us go' and the title to a poem written by Gloria Anzaldúa about her experience teaching in the south Texas public system: Gloria Anzaldua and AnaLouise Keating, (eds.), 'Tihueque', in *The Gloria Anzaldúa Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), pp. 3-4 doi: 10.1215/9780822391272-002.

48 A playful paraphrasing of Jorge Luis Borges' *On Exactitude in Science*. Jorge Luis Borges, *A Universal History of Infamy*, trans. by Norman Thomas Di Giovanni (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975).

49 In describing the way that the sense of the domestic was crucial in the articulation of the American nation in the nineteenth century, Amy Kaplan suggests that 'a sense of the foreign is necessary to erect the boundaries that enclose the nation as home.' See: Amy Kaplan, 'Manifest Domesticity', *American Literature*, 70.3 (1998), pp. 581–606, doi: 10.2307/2902710.

50 Heike Paul, 'Agrarianism, Expansionism, and the Myth of the American West', in *The Myths That Made America, An Introduction to American Studies* (Transcript Verlag, 2014), pp. 311–66, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv1wxsdq.10 [accessed 1 December 2023].

51 Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981).

52 Josh Kun, '"Defending What's Rightly Ours": An Introduction to Facundo Bernal's Forgotten Masterpiece of Los Angeles Literature', in *A Stab in the Dark* (Los Angeles: LARB, 2019), p. xviii.

postcolonial' histories which are made invisible by a 'rigid, inflexible reality in which individuals have been stripped of history and indigenous identity.'[55]

The underworld is also used in *Lost Children Archive*, Luiselli's novel which critiques the spatial mythology of the United States and the way it enables ideas of sovereignty and border delineation. As Luiselli discusses, the United States is often narrated as the territorial expansion and colonisation that moves from East to West and which manifests itself in the road trip novel as a form of 'acrossness' which, in its insidiousness, silences the other foundational myths of the country, such as the Hispanic presence that suggests a movement from South to North.[56] In giving visibility to the other stories that make up the United States, Luiselli seeks to invoke the Latin-American literary tradition in which a voyage is codified as a descent into consciousness and the underworld. The exploration of the horizontal and vertical echoes Anzaldúa, who suggested the movement up north not as an invasion but the eternal return to Aztlán, the mythical place from which Aztec people were said to originate.[57] Crossing the border is not only a physical act of moving from one territory to another, but an act of translation and a constant toing and froing between two cultures and identities.

CONCLUSION

Anzaldúa tells us the border is where the first world grates against the third and bleeds. It is also where two projects of colonisation meet and where two forms of imagining the future, Science Fiction and Magical Realism, mingle and contaminate each other. In this paper I have analysed how the new technologies of the border are inspired and narrated through mythologies which ignore and make invisible the South to North movements that have been foundational to the United States, and instead highlight an expansion of East to West. To cross the border is a transmigration, a change of state which for many involves a symbolic movement from a darker to a lighter shade of skin. I mirror this transition in the shift from one imagination of the future, predicated by technology as the answer to create a utopian space, to another, which enables different mythologies to co-exist in the text.

Stories are crucial in the construction of the self and the sense of identity. Paul Ricoeur argues that storytelling is crucial in making sense of the world and Donna Haraway invites a practice of fabling, full of wild facts and animals, as the key to create liveable futures.[58] The fundamental role of storying in locating ourselves in relation to the past, present

53 Bernal was influenced by modernist poets such as Ruben Darío Gutiérrez Najera and Amado Nervo. Unlike them, his verse was decisively 'low-brow', written to be published in the popular press. Anthony Seidman, the translator for the Los Angeles Review of Books' edition of A Stab in the Dark, reflects on Bernal's technique saying his prosody was already becoming passé but showed exceptional dexterity in incorporating popular dichos and Mexican slang. See: Facundo Bernal, *A Stab in the Dark* (Los Angeles: LARB, 2019).

54 Yuri Herrera, *Signs Preceding the End of the World* (Sheffield: & Other Stories, 2015).

55 Cordelia E. Barrera, 'Utopic Dreaming on the Borderlands: An Anzaldúan Reading of Yuri Herrera's Signs Preceding the End of the World', *Utopian Studies*, 31.3 (2020), pp. 475–93, (p. 481), doi:10.5325/utopianstudies.31.3.0475.

56 Luiselli describes the novel in terms that it seeks to destabilise the genre of the American road trip novel as a way of making visible the other stories that are made invisible. See Luiselli, 'Lost Children Archive at the Penguin Random House Open Book Event'.

57 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 2012).

58 Paul Ricoeur, 'The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality', *Man and World*, 12.2 (1979), pp. 123–41, doi:10.1007/BF01252461; Donna Haraway, *SF: Speculative Fabulation and String Figures* (Kassel: Hatje Cantz, 2011).

and future explains the appeal that mythologies, especially self-mythologies, hold for Silicon Valley. It also explains the potential of these mythologies to shape architectural spaces. As I write elsewhere, tropes and storylines borrowed from Science Fiction and Fantasy increasingly shape our expectations of what it means to be at home, the gendered roles within it, and the relation to new devices meant to 'serve' us.[59] The new technologies of the border are narrated in the register of technological utopia, offering a safer world to those who are lucky enough to be inside its boundaries but as Elizabeth Grosz suggests, utopias are often a reflection of the past masquerading as the future, which makes the narrative of the past a crucial and political act.[60]

The use of Science Fiction and Fantasy enables a partial and selective memory of the borderlands which excludes racialised bodies and their stories of movement, which have also defined the land. To story the border, and to welcome the dual spatiality and ambiguity of Magical Realism, is a political act to shape the politics of the possible – not making improbable technologies like force fields believable but enabling the multiple memories of the land to exist, with its encounters and multiplicity. Despite the current political climate, which reduces the crossing as an economic and often criminal act, the move from South to North is laden with a history of exchange that is central to the formation of the United States and of Mexico itself.

59 Luis Hernan and Carolina Ramirez-Figueroa, 'Time Is out of Joint: Digital Domesticity and Magical Realism', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 75.2 (2021), pp. 184–91, https://doi.org/10.1080/10464883.2021.1947672; Luis Hernan and Carolina Ramirez-Figueroa, 'A Home with a Future. Digital Domesticity and the Vague Fictions of Silicon Valley', *Architecture and Culture*, pp. 1–21, doi.org/10.1080/20507828.2023.2170118.

60 Utopia is, in the words of Elizabeth Grosz, the enactment of ideals of a privileged few which, paradoxically, offers no future at all but the pretence of the past in the trappings of tomorrow. See: Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space*, Writing Architecture Series (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001).

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His research explores the interface between stories, narrative and architecture. Inspired by the Latin-American literary tradition, Luis' work springs from stories as central to the way that we inhabit and make sense of architecture and urban space. He is particularly interested in the political, social and spatial aspects of the future, examining how ideas of progress, modernity and utopia have come to shape the imaginaries of buildings and cities, interfacing as well with the production of nostalgia and desire in late-stage capitalism. He explores the notion of futures in the domestic space and in the articulation of the Mexico-United States border, a process which has strengthened my interest in the logic of Empire and colonialism. This trajectory has evolved in an interest in the past and lost futures in the North of England, looking at the way that de-industrialisation has been narrated by local communities and intertwined with the processes of extraction and exploitation by Empire.

Luis' research is transdisciplinary, combining critical theory with creative practice. Parallel to his career as a critical writer and researcher, Luis also practices as photographer, poet and fiction writer. He is involved in a wide range of initiatives including the SSoA Feminist Library and the Architectural Network for Decolonising (AND).

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